

A HISTORY OF THE WOMEN MARINES, 1946-1977



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

COVER: On 4 November 1948, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Clifton B. Cates administers the oath to the first three women to be sworn into the Regular Marine Corps. They are (left to right) LtCol Katherine A. Towle, Maj Julia E. Hamblet, and 1stLt Mary J. Hale.

A HISTORY OF THE WOMEN MARINES, 1946-1977

by

Colonel Mary V. StremLOW, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve



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Foreword

Despite the acknowledged contribution made by the 20,000 women Reservists who served in the Marine Corps during World War II, there was no thought in 1946 of maintaining women on active duty or, for that matter, even in the Reserve forces. This volume recounts the events that brought about the change in thinking on the part of Marines, both men and women, that led to the integration of women into the Corps, to the point where they now constitute eight percent of our strength.

The project was the idea of Brigadier General Margaret A. Brewer, who, in 1975, as the last Director of Women Marines, noted that the phasing out of women-only organizations marked the start of a new era for women in the Corps, and the end of an old one. Further, she rightly reasoned that the increased assimilation of women would make the historical trail of women in Marine Corps difficult to follow.

The story is drawn from official reports, documents, personal interviews, and transcribed reminiscences collected by the author and preserved by the Oral History and Archives Sections of the History and Museums Division.

The pattern set during World War II of calling women Reservists "WRs" was followed after the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948 by referring to the women as "Women Marines," or more often as "WMs." In the mid-1970s there was a mood to erase all appearances of a separate organization for women in the Marine Corps and an effort was made to refer to the women simply as Marines. When it was necessary to distinguish between the sexes, the noun "woman" with a lower case "w" was used as an adjective. Thus, throughout the text the terms "WR" and "WM" are used only when dictated by the context.

The comment edition of this manuscript was read by many Marines, men and women, who were directly associated with the events. All but one of the former Directors of Women Marines contributed to the work and reviewed the manuscript draft. Unfortunately, Colonel Katherine A. Towle was too ill to participate.

The author, Colonel Mary V. StremLOW, now a retired Reservist, has a bachelor of science degree from New York State University College at Buffalo. She counts three other women Marines in her family—two aunts, Corporal Rose M. Nigro and Master Sergeant Petrina C. Nigro, who served as WRs in World War II, and her sister, retired Major Carol Vertalino Diliberto. Colonel StremLOW came to the History and Museums Division in 1976 with experience as a company commander; S-3; executive officer of Woman Recruit Training Battalion, Parris Island; inspector-instructor of Women Reserve Platoon, 2d Infantry Battalion, Boston; instructor at the Woman Officer School, Quantico; and woman officer selection officer for the 1st Marine Corps District.

In the interests of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on this history from interested individuals.



E. H. SIMMONS
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Preface

A History of the Women Marines, 1946-1977 is almost entirely derived from raw files, interviews and conversations, newspaper articles, muster rolls and unit diaries, and materials loaned by Marines. There was no one large body of records available. In the course of the project, more than 300 letters were written to individuals, several mass mailings were made, and notices soliciting information were printed in all post and station newspapers, *Leatherneck*, *Marine Corps Gazette*, *Retired Marine*, and the newsletters of Marine Corps associations. More than 100 written responses were received and some women Marines generously loaned us personal papers and precious scrapbooks. Especially helpful in piecing together the events between World War II and the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act were the scrapbooks of former Director of Women Marines Colonel Julia E. Hamblet, and former WR Dorothy M. Munroe. Taped interviews were conducted with 32 women, including former Director of the Women's Reserve Colonel Ruth Cheney Streeter.

Researching this history was a challenge. Women's units were extremely difficult to find. Only those labeled "Women Marine Company" were easily identified. At times, days were spent screening the muster rolls of all the companies of all the battalions on a base looking for one with personnel having feminine first names. More recent unit diaries were even less useful since they are not signed by commanding officers and initials are used rather than first names. To add to the problem, the Corps had no system that permits a researcher to find a married woman when only her maiden name is known, or vice versa.

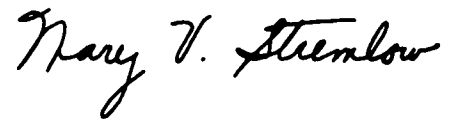
The author and the women Marines whose story is told in this monograph owe a special debt of gratitude to Master Sergeant Laura J. Dennis, USMCR, now retired, who from January to October 1977 voluntarily worked several days a week at the History and Museums Division, doing the painstaking research that resulted in the publication of much more material than would have been otherwise possible. Had it not been for her tenacity and dogged determination, easily 100 names, now documented for posterity, would not have made it to these pages. She tracked vague but important leads that the author, because of limited time allowed for the study, could not. Later, as a civilian volunteer, she shepherded the work through the comment edition stage and assisted in the search and final selection of photographs.

Master Sergeant Dennis also induced Colonel Agnes M. Kennedy, USMCR, to volunteer for the difficult task of indexing the manuscript. In the process, Colonel Kennedy further assisted in checking and verifying hundreds of names cited. Her own experience as a Marine officer enabled her also to make other valuable comments.

The manuscript was prepared under the editorial direction of Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., chief historian of the History and Museums Division. Teacher and mentor, he encouraged the author to take the step from merely parroting a string of facts to presenting interpretations as appeared justified. More than 100 Marines reviewed the draft edition and, thanks in large measure to Mr. Shaw's expert guidance, few took issue with the historical facts or the interpretations of those facts.

The author also received valuable assistance from Mrs. Catherine A. Kerns, of the division's Publications Production Section, who prepared the typeset version of the manuscript, offering numerous stylistic suggestions in the process, and who was particularly helpful in the rendering of captions

for photographs and in designing the tables which appear both within the text and in the appendices. Thanks also are due to Mr. W. Stephen Hill, the division's graphic artist, who is the book's designer, and who prepared all of the boards used in printing. His contribution has been to enhance the usefulness of the book by making its appearance especially attractive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mary V. StremLOW". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large, stylized initial 'M' and a prominent 'V'.

MARY V. STREMLow
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve

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Introduction

"The opinion generally held by the Marine Corps is that women have no proper place or function in the regular service in peace-time. This opinion is concurred in by the Director of Marine Corps Women's Reserve, and a majority of the Women Reserves."¹ In these words, Brigadier General Gerald C. Thomas, Director, Division of Plans and Policies in October 1945, stated the basic Marine Corps case against women on active duty. He elaborated his stand with the contention, "The American tradition is that a woman's place is in the home . . ." and, "Women do not take kindly to military regimentation. During the war they have accepted the regulations imposed on them, but hereafter the problem of enforcing discipline alone would be a headache."²

The controversy over what to do with the women had been going on for months before the hostilities of World War II ended. It was a problem—an emotional one at that—which had to be faced. It was agreed that the Women Reserves (WRs) had successfully met the challenge of military service. At the close of the war, working in 225 specialties in 16 out of 21 functional fields, WRs constituted 85 percent of the enlisted personnel at Headquarters Marine Corps and one-half to two-thirds of the permanent personnel at all large Marine Corps posts and stations.³ It was generally acknowledged that it had been necessary to activate a women's unit for wartime duty; it was safe to assume that women would be called upon in any future, major emergency; most Marines, however, men and women, displayed a marked lack of enthusiasm toward the prospect of women in the postwar Marine Corps. The men were understandably reluctant to admit women permanently into one of the few remaining male-dominated societies, and the senior women officers were concerned about the type of women who would volunteer. Colonel Ruth C. Streeter, wartime Director of the Marine Corps Women Reserves (MCWR), believed that there was a difference in the women who enlisted for purely patriotic reasons due to the war, and those who enlisted after the G.I. Bill was passed—those who joined for what they could get for themselves.⁴

The pressure to give peacetime military status to women came from the other services, most notably the Navy. In the summer of 1945, the Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal, made the statement, "The Navy favors retention, at least in cadre strength, of the WAVES, as well as SPARS and the Marine Auxiliary."^{*}

Hoping to keep the Marine Corps out of any grand-scale plan for maintaining a women's corps in peacetime, Colonel Streeter developed a plan for an inactive Women's Reserve to be administered by no more than 10 women officers on active duty. On the accompanying routing sheet, she pencilled:

These comments are submitted at this time because there is considerable agitation in the Navy in favor of keeping WAVES on *active* duty in peacetime. It comes mostly from BuAir, Communications, and Hospital Corps. The WAVES themselves are much opposed to the plan.⁵

Colonel Streeter, tempered by her experience in building a wartime women's organization from nothing, took a very practical approach to the matter. She recognized that in planning a Reserve of women, wastage was going to occur because many of the women trained for military service would marry and have children, but this was a loss which would have to be accepted if women were truly needed. Indeed, if war threatened, even mothers could give a few months' active service for recruiting and training programs until enough new women Marines were ready to carry on.

By December 1945, General Thomas' division had developed a detailed plan for training a postwar, inactive, Volunteer MCWR (VMCWR) of 500 officers

^{*}In 1943, when women joined the Marine Corps, the Director of Reserve, Colonel Littleton W. T. Waller, wrote to Representative Louis L. Ludlow of Indiana: ". . . these women will not be auxiliary, but members of the Marine Corps Reserve which is an integral part of the Corps and as . . . they will be performing many duties of Marines it was felt they should be so known." Col Littleton W. T. Waller, Jr., ltr to Hon. Louis L. Ludlow, dtd 8Feb43. (File 1535-55-10, Female Enrollment Marine Corps Reserve No. 1, Central Files, HQMC). Thus, the term *auxiliary* used by the secretary was incorrect.

and 4,500 enlisted women, that would provide a nucleus of ready WRs capable of being expanded rapidly into a war-strength organization. In the introduction to this plan it was bluntly stated, "The ar-

guments against retention . . . preclude any further discussion in favor of women being kept on active duty."⁶ In the eyes of the leading Marines, the case was closed.

CHAPTER 1

A Time of Uncertainty, 1946-1948

*A Time of Uncertainty—Postwar Women's Reserve Board—Termination of the Wartime MCWR
Retention of the WRs at HQMC—A New Director—The Volunteer Women's Reserve
4th Anniversary Celebration, 13 February 1947—The Women's VTUs—Plans for the Organized Reserve
Release of the WRs Delayed Again—Stenographers Recalled*

A Time of Uncertainty

At the end of the war in August 1945, the strength of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve was approximately 17,640 enlisted women and 820 officers. Demobilization procedures for women called for the mandatory resignation or discharge of all WRs, officers and enlisted. Demobilization was to be completed by 1 September 1946.

Colonel Streeter, who felt strongly that no woman should remain after she was no longer needed, asked to be released. She resigned on 6 December 1945 and, the following day, her assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Katherine A. Towle was appointed the second Director of the wartime Marine Corps Women's Reserve and promoted to the rank of colonel. To Colonel Towle fell the dual responsibility of overseeing the demobilization of the women and planning for a postwar women's organization.

In the spring of 1946 there was a steady flow of correspondence between the Chief of Naval Personnel, Vice Admiral Louis E. Denfeld, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General Alexander A. Vandegrift. The Navy was making plans for a WAVE organization with 1,500 officers and 10,000 enlisted women on active duty. The Army had already publicly announced its plan to give Regular status to the WACs.¹ The Commandant, however, stood firm. The only women Marines on active duty during peacetime would be "Director, VMCWR; OIC [Officer in Charge], Personnel; OIC, Planning and Training; OIC, Recruiting; six officers, one officer assigned to each Recruiting Division."²

Recognizing that some sort of women's military organization was inevitable, and because legislation authorizing a women's inactive Reserve was pending, the Marine Corps no longer required WR officers to resign. Those still on active duty were allowed to request assignment to inactive status, and those already separated were sent a letter asking them to reenlist in the Reserve and reminding them of the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to the Marine Corps Reserve. Upon request, they could be reappointed to the permanent rank held upon resignation.³

Former colonel Mrs. Streeter was one of the women who applied for a Reserve commission, but her request was denied because of a legal restriction that precluded the appointment of more than one woman colonel in the Reserve. In fact, Mrs. Streeter, who saw the wartime Women's Reserve through all of its growing pains and its initial demobilization, had voluntarily given up terminal leave in order that her successor (then Lieutenant Colonel Towle) might immediately have the rank of colonel. The Commandant told Mrs. Streeter that he would recommend her to the Secretary of the Navy for reappointment in her rightful rank in the inactive Reserve, but the Navy Judge Advocate General held that there could be no exception. He later reversed his decision and Mildred H. McAfee Horton, the WAVE Director, was given Reserve status as a captain.*

Colonel Joseph W. Knighton, legal aide to the Commandant, advised General Vandegrift on 13 March 1946 of the Army's and the Navy's plans to keep women on active duty. They even allowed for women in their budgets—something that the Marine Corps was not to consider until after passage of the women's armed forces legislation in 1948. It was apparent that Admiral Denfeld was giving more than lip service to the support of women since he had instructed the Na-

*Subsequently, efforts were made by Colonel Towle, and two Commandants, General Vandegrift and General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., to straighten out the matter. It was not until 1959, however, through the persistence of Colonel Julia E. Hamblet, that this situation was satisfactorily resolved. In a letter to the Chairman, Board for Corrections of Naval Records, the then Commandant, General Randolph McC. Pate, wrote: "Correction of Mrs. Streeter's records would erase an apparent inequity and allow her to be affiliated with the Marine Corps Women's Reserve which she was so instrumental in establishing. This correction would afford the Commandant of the Marine Corps great satisfaction." (CMC ltr to Chairman, Bd for Corr of NavRecords, dtd 31Mar59 [*Postwar MCWR I File*]). He also wrote to Mrs. Streeter and said, "In view of your outstanding contribution to the Corps, I sincerely hope you will not deprive me of the opportunity of recommissioning you as a Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve." (Gen Randolph McC. Pate ltr to Mrs. Ruth C. Streeter, dtd 25Feb59 [*Postwar MCWR I file*]). And so, on 25 June 1959, Ruth Cheney Streeter was reappointed a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and retired.

vy's judge advocate general to prepare a bill which would enable the Navy to have women in its Regular component. Colonel Knighton put two questions to the Commandant:

(1) Does the Marine Corps want women in its regular peacetime establishment? (2) If the answer is negative, can the Marine Corps justify this stance if the Army and the Navy have come to the conclusion that women should be included in their permanent establishment?⁴

In response, the Plans and Policy Division recommended that the Marine Corps be excluded from the provisions of Denfeld's proposed legislation to provide Regular status for women because "... the number of billets which could be filled to advantage by women in the postwar Marine Corps is so limited that the increased administrative overhead could not be justified." Although the Commandant approved this recommendation on 18 March, that was not the end of it.

Postwar Women's Reserve Board

Acting on a suggestion from Colonel Towle, on 28 March 1946, General Vandegrift appointed Colonel Randolph McC. Pate, Director, Division of Reserve, senior member of a board to recommend policies for administration of women in the Marine Corps postwar Reserve structure. The board convened at Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) on 1 April and consisted of Colonel Pate, Colonel Richard C. Mangrum, Colonel Katherine A. Towle, and Major Ernest L. Medford, Jr., with Major Cornelia D. T. Williams and Major Marion Wing as additional members, and Captain Sarah M. Vardy as member and recorder.⁵

The report of this board, which was approved by the Commandant on 7 June, called for women to be included in both the Volunteer and Organized components of the Reserve. Enlisted women would be trained at unit meetings in home armories. Officers would train at an annual summer officer candidate school to be established at Quantico and then return home to participate in a Reserve unit. A total of 45 officers and 32 enlisted women—all Reservists—would be assigned to continuous active duty to administer the program. It was spelled out that no woman would be allowed to remain on active duty longer than four years, and summer training was not considered necessary even for the organized Reservists. At the time of the study, only the volunteer, inactive status was legally possible and many of the 40 recommendations were based upon the premise that legislation would

be passed authorizing inclusion of woman in the Organized Reserve. Finally, the board recommended that a qualified woman Reservist of field grade be selected as soon as possible for the position of director and that she be appointed to the rank of colonel.⁷

Concurrence with the creation of a permanent women's Reserve was unanimous. The staff comments, for the most part, dealt with minor administrative details. Colonel Knighton, however, spotted the weakness which would eventually alter the opinions of the leading women officers. He recognized that the four-year active duty limit was impractical, and he stated:

... where can you find a woman, unless she happens to be unemployed and hunting for a job, who would agree to serve on active duty for a short period? In peacetime housewives will not volunteer, socialites will not be interested, and a woman who has to work for a living, unless she is temporarily looking for employment, will certainly not sign up for a few years of active duty in the Women's Reserve.⁸

Long before the board report was officially approved, Colonel Towle outlined its main points in a statement she prepared for the Joint Army-Navy Personnel Board on 17 April, and for the 9 May House Naval Affairs Committee Hearings on H. R. Bill 5919, "To amend the Naval Reserve Act of 1938, as amended so as to establish the Women's Reserve on a permanent basis"*

By the time the bill was reported out of committee on 21 May, it had undergone some major changes. The next day, Admiral Denfeld wrote to Representative Margaret Chase Smith of Maine giving his views of what the legislation should embody. Due mainly to her efforts, the subsequent draft read:

All laws or parts of laws which authorize the appointment of persons to commissioned grades or ranks in the Regular Navy and Regular Marine Corps and which authorize the enlistment of persons in the Regular Navy and Regular Marine Corps should be construed to include the authority to appoint and enlist women in the Regular Navy and Regular Marine Corps in the same manner and under the same conditions as such laws or parts of laws apply to the appointment and enlistment of men.⁹

Now, like it or not, the Marine Corps was included. In the words of Victor Hugo, "No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come."¹⁰

*See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 (P.L. 625).



Marine Corps Commandant Gen. A. A. Vandegrift (center) is shown with Col. Katherine A. Towle (right) and Col. Ruth C. Streeter (left) in December 1945. Col. Towle has just succeeded Col. Streeter as the post-war Director, Marine Corps Women's Reserve.

Termination of the Wartime MCWR

The office of the wartime MCWR was closed on 15 June 1946 when Colonel Towle began her terminal leave. Before leaving the Marine Corps to return to the University of California's Berkeley campus as administrative assistant to the vice president and provost, Colonel Towle proposed the name of Major Julia E. Hamblet to be director of the women's postwar organization. She wrote:

It is believed that Major Hamblet has all the attributes and qualifications desirable in a director of a postwar MCWR. She is a college graduate, about 30 years of age (which is considered a great advantage in appealing to volunteers among younger women, especially those of college age), of fine appearance, with a great deal of natural dignity and poise, and has an outstanding service record and reputation. She has had experience in both line and aviation assignments and has served in the present MCWR since her commissioning in the First Officers' Class in May 1943.¹¹

The recommendation of Major Hamblet to head up the postwar MCWR was acknowledged and held in abeyance.

Turning to another matter, Colonel Towle suggested that her assistant, Captain Mary V. Illich, continue duty in the Personnel Department to take care of the work incident to the termination of the office of the director. Captain Illich and one private first class were assigned the task of tying up the administrative details of the wartime Women's Reserve and were expected to finish by 15 July 1946.

Retention of the WRs at HQMC

It is ironic that only two months earlier, on 14 June, in a report on the state of the MCWR to the Director of Personnel, Colonel Towle wrote:

General morale during demobilization has been gratifyingly high. Part of this had been due to the definite stand

the Marine Corps itself had taken from the beginning on MCWR demobilization, particularly in setting and maintaining 1 September as the terminal date of the wartime Women's Reserve. It had been a goal to work toward, and Marine Corps women have never had the uncertainty and confusion concerning demobilization which have occurred in some of the other women's services because of the shifting of date and changes in policy.¹²

Most of the WRs still on active duty in the summer of 1946 were working at Headquarters on the administrative job of demobilization of the wartime Marine Corps. In spite of the general feeling against retention of women in the Marine Corps, individual work supervisors were anxious to keep their women on the job. As the September deadline for the release of all WRs neared, case after case of exception was requested. Few were granted, but this activity not only kept Captain Illich on the job, but also on 30 August gave her an assistant, First Lieutenant Mary Janice Hale.*

This appointment followed a major change in policy announced on 7 August 1946 when the Commandant authorized the retention on active duty at HQMC, on a voluntary basis, of 100 WRs for a period of eight months. These women, clerk typists, payroll clerks, and auditors, were to be assigned to a new division of the Personnel Department established to administer the Armed Forces Leave Act of 1946. One officer would be retained to command a company to be activated on 1 September, all of whose members would live off post and be placed on subsistence and quarters allowances. The last of the WR barracks was finally closed. As an inducement to apply, privates first class who were accepted would be automatically promoted to corporal.¹³

The next day, 8 August, the Commandant authorized the retention of 200 additional WRs until 30 June 1947. It was specified that these women "... must have clerical, stenographic or other specific ability (no cooks, truck drivers, hairdressers, etc., unless they have a secondary clerical specification)."¹⁴

Company E, 1st Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, commanded by First Lieutenant Regina M. Durant, was activated on 19 August 1946 with a strength of 12 officers and 286 enlisted women, with Master Sergeant Geraldine M. Moran as first sergeant.

*Lieutenant Colonel Hale, who retired in March 1964, is the only woman officer to have served on continuous active duty from World War II until the completion of a 20-year career.

A New Director

Major Julia E. Hamblet had served as assistant for the Women's Reserve from December 1945 until she was released from active duty in April 1946. She had never considered the military as a career and was very much in favor of the Marine Corps plan for women in organized and volunteer Reserve units.

While in England visiting her family, Major Hamblet, as other Marine veterans, received numerous letters from Headquarters Marine Corps. The familiar brown envelopes contained words of thanks and appreciation for wartime service, advice regarding veteran's benefits, a request to keep in contact with the Reserve District commander, and information regarding the planning for the postwar Reserve.

In mid-June 1946, rushing to an appointment from her brother's London home, she found yet another message from Headquarters. In a hurry, she put it in her purse and promptly forgot it. Nearly a week later, while at a party, she remembered the letter and opened it to find that it was not the routine form letter she had come to expect. Instead it was a personal letter to her from the Commandant, General Vandegrift.

In the letter he explained the plan to establish women as part of the Organized Reserve and to maintain on active duty a limited number of women Reservists to administer the program. He stated:

Because of your record and experience in the present Marine Corps Women's Reserve, you have been selected to fill the position of Director of the postwar Women's Reserve, and it is hoped that you will be interested in accepting this appointment. If you do accept, it is desired that you be available for duty at Headquarters Marine Corps not later than 1 September 1946. You will understand, of course, that the continuance of a postwar Women's Reserve and the position of Director are contingent upon the enactment of enabling legislation by the Congress which is currently giving it consideration.

A prompt reply will be appreciated.¹⁵

Had she not immediately thereafter received letters from both Colonels Streeter and Towle expressing their pleasure at her selection and their concern for the future of the MCWR, Major Hamblet's first inclination would have been to refuse the appointment. Rather, on 25 June, she wrote to the Commandant and accepted.

Due to the difficulty in obtaining transportation from England at the time, she asked to be activated there, so that she could travel on military orders.¹⁶ Existing laws did not permit members of the MCWR to

be on active duty anywhere outside the United States except Hawaii. Therefore, she was informed that she could not be assigned to duty until her return.¹⁷ Major Hamblet reported to the Division of Reserve, Headquarters Marine Corps on 6 September 1946, and became the Director, MCWR.

At this time two distinct women Marine programs existed with the sex of their members as the only common denominator. At Headquarters, the several hundred retained wartime WRs continued to work on administrative matters unrelated to the MCWR. These women were under the cognizance of Captain Illich in the Personnel Division. Then there was Major Hamblet in the Division of Reserve concerned with initiating detailed planning for a postwar, inactive Reserve. Inevitably, some confusion arose. In a study dated 8 October, Major Hamblet wrote:

The relationship of the undersigned to the 286 enlisted women and 5 officers retained on active duty after 1 September 1946 for assignment other than MCWR postwar planning is not at present clear. It would seem evident, however, that the powers assigned to the Director, MCWR, should be exercised in relation to all women reservists, on whatever basis they may be serving.¹⁸

Clarification was soon made, in no uncertain terms, in a Headquarters Memorandum of 16 October 1946 which stated the policy for the administration of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. The wording was precise and unequivocal, and it was the foundation of a policy that was to last for more than 25 years. The Commandant directed:

That all matters of policy and procedure pertaining to the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, which are initiated by any department or division of Headquarters Marine Corps, be referred to the Director, MCWR, for comment and recommendation. In regard to matters of policy, such reference shall be made prior to submission to the Commandant of the Marine Corps for approval; in matters of procedure, such reference shall be made prior to execution.¹⁹

The Volunteer Women's Reserve

With a staff of two women, First Lieutenant Mary J. Hale and Technical Sergeant Dolores M. Adam, Major Hamblet began her work. She faced the task totally committed to the urgency of obtaining as soon as possible the nucleus of a postwar women's Reserve. Her visit to England and France during the summer convinced her that the world situation was still unsettled and that greater utilization of womanpower in the U.S. military would be required in the event of another war. As a member of the first officer training class in

the wartime MCWR, she saw the difficulties of building up such an organization after an emergency had already occurred. In 1943, the Marine Corps had been forced to rely on civilian facilities and Navy personnel to get its women's program started. Worse, male Marines, needed for combat, were used instead to train women.

Major Hamblet recognized that the unclear status of the women's legislation in 1946 jeopardized the success of a women's Reserve. The long and uncertain delay allowed former women Reservists to become absorbed in their civilian interests and lessened the chance of their enlisting in a future Reserve.

She questioned the necessity of waiting until the legislation was actually passed before taking positive action. There was reasonable doubt about the legality of an Organized Reserve but she believed that no such obstacle blocked the creation of a Volunteer Reserve. Indeed, the WAVES were, at that time, reenlisting women for full-time active duty in the Volunteer Reserve.

Pending the enactment of permissive legislation, Major Hamblet urged immediate enlistment of as many former members of the MCWR as possible in a volunteer status since, she reasoned:

These women already have had indoctrination and training; and those among them who do desire could later transfer to an "Organized Reserve," if one were activated. Meanwhile, they would at least constitute a roster of trained personnel, available for active duty if the need arose.²⁰

A step in this direction was taken on 23 December with the publication of Marine Corps Letter of Instruction 1391, authorizing the enlistment of former women Reservists in the Marine Corps Reserve. This was part of a purposeful effort to maintain contact with the women who had served so well in World War II. The intention was to keep the women interested and predisposed to join a volunteer or organized unit when legally possible. Furthermore, it supplied the Corps with a pool of ready, trained volunteers. The first enlistment contract received was that of Staff Sergeant Elizabeth Janet Steele, who, a few months later, activated and commanded Volunteer Training Unit 3-1(WR), New York, New York.²¹

4th Anniversary Celebration, 13 February 1947

Keeping in touch with former WRs became a task of giant proportions for the three women—Major Hamblet, Lieutenant Hale, and Sergeant Adam. They drew the cases of nearly all the 18,000 World War II

women Reservists and personally reviewed each one in order to compile an up-to-date roster with current addresses. Ostensibly, this list was to be used in determining the geographic areas best suited for future Organized Reserve units, but it was put to a more immediate use in planning a celebration in honor of the fourth anniversary of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve.²²

Selected officers in 25 cities were asked to accept chairmanship of these birthday parties and were provided with the names of officers and capable NCOs in their area. They were told:

In order to afford continuity to the MCWR it is important that we have anniversary parties all over the country this year and bring together again as many as possible of the former WR's, both officers and enlisted personnel. . . . Because there has been such a delay in getting the postwar program underway, it is just that much more important that we do a bang-up job on February 13th. . . . It is realized what an undertaking this will be, but the dividends in the form of the goodwill of former WR's (which we are most anxious to have!) will be tremendous.²³

Since no funds were provided, many of these officers and NCOs used their own money for stationery and postage in order to contact the veterans.

Birthday greetings were sent to individual women Reservists reminding them that this was the time to recall friendship and experiences. "Get out the uniform—dust off the moth balls, let out the seams, roll up the hair and gather round to rehash the Marine Corps days," they were told.²⁴

More than 2,500 WRs attended the parties in 22 cities and at the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point, North Carolina. San Francisco, where 395 women gathered under the chairmanship of First Lieutenant Pearl Martin to hear the guest speaker, Colonel Towle, was the site of the largest celebration. Another coup was scored by Captain Mildred Dupont and the New York WRs when former Colonel Streeter agreed to be the honored guest and to help cut the traditional birthday cake.

The Marine Corps Women's Reserve Post 907, American Legion, in Chicago sponsored a grand event in the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel. The committee was headed by First Lieutenant Dorothy R. Dietz. Captain Emma H. Hendrickson (later Clowers), who was to become one of the first 20 Regular women Marine officers in November 1948, read congratulatory messages from Headquarters and spoke to the group of the plans to utilize women in the Reserves.

The Washington, D.C. area celebration was unique in that it was attended by former WRs, inactive women Reservists, and numbers of women still on active duty.

The fourth anniversary parties accomplished their mission. In addition to being occasions of much fun and recall, they provided Headquarters with a roster of former WRs who were still interested in the Marine Corps and a nucleus of officers and NCOs who were able organizers.

The Women's VTUs

Authorization for the formation of volunteer training units (VTUs) came on 9 January 1947 in Letter of Instruction 1397. The objective of this program was to develop a ". . . pool of efficient general duty, staff and specialist personnel which, on call, can fill needs for individuals or groups in an emergency."²⁵ In order to form a VTU, a group of 10 Reservists, commissioned or enlisted, male or female, was required. Women could, of course, join a unit already established by men.

The appeal was made almost entirely to patriotism and *esprit de corps*. The Marine Corps Reserve recruiting material offered membership, tradition, and prestige of the Corps, credit toward promotion in rank, social and athletic activities, a lapel pin, and an I.D. card. Attendance and participation were voluntary and members could not be called to active duty without their consent except in the event of war or national emergency. Reservists would retain the rank held on discharge, and only male members would be eligible for periods of active duty.²⁶

There was considerable latitude allowed in planning a VTU training schedule. Units could specialize in one field, such as intelligence, communications, photography, etc., or follow a more general pattern. A general unit might emphasize lectures on current world problems, and a women's unit might spend all its time giving clerical assistance to the male Marine Reservists.

Seattle has the distinction of being the home of the first women's Volunteer Training Unit—VTU 13-12(WR)—established in January 1947 and commanded by Captain Nancy M. Roberts.

In November 1947, Maj Julia E. Hamblet (right) congratulates Capt Constance Riseigari-Gai (left), commander of Volunteer Training Unit 1-1, Boston, Massachusetts during ceremonies to present awards earned by Women Reservists during World War II.



From the 1st Marine Corps Reserve District Headquarters, then located in Boston, Captain Constance Risegari-Gai, commanding officer of VTU 1-1(WR), wrote:

Dear Ex-Marine,

Do you want to remain an ex-Marine — or would you like to drop the "ex", remove the "homing pigeon", "ruptured duck" or whatever you call it from your uniform, and again be able to write USMCR after your name?

Yes, the Corps wants you back, right now, in the Volunteer Reserve, although later you may have an opportunity to go into the Organized Reserve.²⁷

Boston chose Marine Corps administration as its specialty, scheduled regular lectures, and got "field practice" by assisting the 2d Infantry Battalion, USMCR, with its paperwork. The Boston WRs met every Wednesday night on the fourth deck of the Navy Building-Marine Corps Reserve Armory (formerly the Fargo Building) to type enlistment papers, medical records, and routine correspondence.

Elements of that unit gave similar help on Saturday and Sunday mornings to the three Marine aviation squadrons at nearby Squantum. And, on Tuesday, others went south to Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot to lend a hand to Company B, 2d Infantry Battalion. Frequently, the women were called on for recruiting and public relations activities as well. Lack of work was never a problem.

In the notice for the week of 12 November 1947, Captain Risegari-Gai added, "Major Julia Hamblet expressed much pleasure and satisfaction with the work of VTU 1-1. She stated that we have the largest actually working unit (there is a larger unit in New York which meets for training lectures once a month)."²⁸

The WRs of New York would, no doubt, have taken exception to the captain's assessment of their unit. VTU 3-1(WR), activated in February 1947, and commanded by Staff Sergeant Steele was not only the largest women's volunteer training unit, with a strength at one time of 100 members, but it was the only all enlisted women's VTU and it remained active until 20 August 1957—a little more than 10 years.²⁹ By 1954, it had logged in a record of over 7,000 voluntary unpaid hours of service to the Marine Corps, doing clerical, recruiting, and typing duty for many Marine Reserve units including Marine Fighter Squadron 132, the 1st Infantry Battalion, the 19th Infantry Battalion, and the 14th Signal Company.³⁰

Among its early members were Helen A. Brusack, who eventually integrated into the Regular Marine Corps and remained until her retirement as a gun-

nery sergeant in May 1972; Agnes Hirshinger, who commanded the unit from July 1949 until its deactivation; Dorothy T. Hunt (later Stephenson), who integrated and was a member of the staff that established women's recruit training at Parris Island in 1949; Pearl Jackson, the first enlisted woman accepted for officer candidate training after the integration of women into the Regular Marine Corps; and Alice McIntyre, who later integrated, became a warrant officer, and served 20 years.³¹

Second Lieutenant Julia M. Hornsby activated the Baltimore VTU(WR). Members of the Woman Marine Organized Reserve platoons of the post-Korea era remembered her as the Reserve liaison officer at Parris Island who was vitally involved with their summer training period.

First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder established VTU 12-4 (WR) at San Francisco on 10 February 1948. The next year, serving on continuous active duty, she became the first inspector-instructor (I&I) of the women's Reserve platoon in that city and eventually the I&I of the post-Korea Women Reserve Administration Platoon in Detroit.

In Philadelphia, Captain Dorothy M. Knox commanded VTU 4-4 (WR), activated in September 1947. When the Organized Reserve finally became available to women in 1949, Captain Knox and her entire VTU became the nucleus of Philadelphia's WR platoon. They had already lost one member to the Regulars—Captain Elsie Eleanor Hill. In time, Dorothy Knox integrated, served with the major women's commands—to include assignments as commanding officer of the Woman Marine Detachment at Quantico and later of the Woman Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island—and retired as a colonel in 1970.

San Diego's Volunteer Training Unit, VTU 11-2 (WR) was activated on 26 February 1948 with First Lieutenant Ben Alice Day as commanding officer. Lieutenant Day, among the first 20 Regular women officers, later reverted to the Reserve when, as a major, she married Brigadier General John C. Munn (later Lieutenant General Munn, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps). The Munns retired in 1964 in the first husband-wife, Regular-Reserve retirement ceremony in Corps history.³²

In 1977, Lieutenant Colonel Ben Alice Munn recalled:

... with respect to the interest Colonel W. R. Collins (later Major General, USMC; now retired) had in the group. As the Inspector-Instructor of the Reserve unit in San Diego, he gave most generously of his time and energy to help

set up a program, and to keep the meetings interesting. This was very difficult as the question of what to do with Women Reserves, besides sitting them in front of typewriters, was an unanswered question. There was no training program or syllabus. (The question remained for a good 20 years or more! The Marine Corps had bowed under wartime pressure that historic February 1943, and it was my impression that the Corps was glad, or relieved, to see the last of us go off to inactive duty or to civilian life!)

Perhaps Colonel Collins was ahead of his time for I well remember one lecture he gave to VTU 11-2 (WR) in which he described a trip he made to Russia immediately after hostilities ceased. He gave a vivid description of his observation of Russian women being used in every military job, from sweeping snow off runways to driving tanks.³³

Women's VTUs were also formed in Indianapolis, Indiana; St. Louis, Missouri; Los Angeles, California; Oakland, California; Chicago, Illinois; Rochester, New York; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Kansas City, Missouri; Portland, Oregon; New Orleans, Louisiana; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Atlanta, Georgia; and Washington, D.C. The WR volunteer training units were a source of great pride to the Marine Corps. Between March and December 1947, women Reservists worked a total of 5,000 hours of voluntary service.

The immeasurable importance of these units lies primarily in their effectiveness in keeping hundreds of WRs interested in their Marine Corps affiliation during the two years it took to pass legislation allowing Regular and Organized Reserve status for women. Many of the units later transferred 100 percent to the Organized Reserve. Individuals integrated into the Regular Marine Corps when it became possible in late 1948 and early 1949. Others, mobilized for Korea, remained to complete a 20-year career.

Plans for the Organized Reserve

Planning for the Organized Reserve, which was to be the heart of the peacetime women's program, continued based on the expected passage of enabling legislation. The Marine Corps was deeply committed to this concept and Major Hamblet and her staff worked out the details while at the same time they tried to maintain the interest of former women Reservists. At one time there was talk of 30 women's companies throughout the country. But, by 1947 this figure was reduced to 15 companies at 10 officers and 235 enlisted women each, for a total of 150 officers and 3,525 enlisted women.³⁴ Reserve companies were planned for those cities with the greatest concentration of women Reservists and where interest was the most obvious.

During the year and a half before the law was finally passed, it was the intention of the Marine Corps to activate a Women's Reserve company in each of the following cities: Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; Los Angeles, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; St. Louis, Missouri; Toledo, Ohio; and Washington, D.C.

The legislative delay was frustrating and costly. In spite of efforts to keep the women interested, they drifted away and company-size units never materialized.*

Release of the WRs Delayed Again

In February 1947, the first hashmark, the official insignia of a full four years of active duty and the traditional mark of a "salty" Marine, appeared on the uniform of Technical Sergeant Mary F. Wancheck.³⁵ Others would soon sew them on. Just as the women were settling in and beginning to feel quite at home, the plan for their release was again under discussion.

The Assistant Commandant and Chief of Staff, Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., seemed reluctant and on 17 April 1947, he sent a short memorandum to General Thomas: "Now that the time has come to discharge our WRs do you still want to go through with it? We will lose many good clerks, a number of whom are processing claims, etc."³⁶ The predictable response was, "I feel that we must carry out these discharges. Only 23 of these WR's are working on claims."³⁷

Careful coordination between work sections and the separation center was necessary to facilitate an orderly demobilization. The women were to be transferred to Quantico in groups of 20 per working day during the period from 13 June to 30 June in order to meet the deadline. Because the medical and administrative processing would take several days, it could not be done at Henderson Hall where WR barracks were no longer available. Work sections were assigned quotas of women to be released on a regular schedule to avoid a last-minute overload.

Hardly had the details been arranged when on 22 April, Colonel John Halla, Acting Chief of the Disbursing Branch, asked to keep 28 women Reservists

*For a more thorough discussion of the women's Organized Reserve program, see Chapter 3.

on active duty until 31 December 1947 to work on a backlog of claims. The Commandant approved the request, but, added a terse directive, "... see to it that they are *not* deviated to any other work."³⁸

Contrary to the Commandant's published policy that all matters affecting the MCWR be submitted to the Director, MCWR, Major Hamblet was not consulted on the transaction involving the retention of the 28 women. She called this omission to the attention of the Director, Division of Reserve and reiterated:

The undersigned has stated her arguments against the retention of women on active duty either as reservists or as members of the regular Marine Corps. It is believed that all women who are not working on postwar plans for the MCWR should be discharged as expeditiously as possible. It is considered particularly unadvisable to retain a group as small as twenty-eight.³⁹

Major Hamblet was fighting a losing battle. Not only were there more requests to keep women on active duty but some divisions wanted to call back already released women officers with special qualifications.

The case of Captain Edna Loftus Smith put the whole matter of WR retention back into the spotlight. She was recalled for membership on the Marine Corps Aviation History Board. The Director of Aviation wrote: "This officer is peculiarly well qualified for this duty, more so than any officer in the Marine Corps, due to her wartime duties. . . ."⁴⁰

The legality of her recall opened a Pandora's box of legal considerations. How would she be paid? There was no authorization to use Reserve funds for matters connected to the war already fought and the Commandant had made no mention of women in his statement to Congress relative to the 1948 Reserve appropriations. Beyond the question of money, Brigadier General William T. Clement, Director, Division of Reserve, even doubted the authority to maintain WRs in the Volunteer Reserve under existing laws.

In spite of his uncertainty and due to the critical personnel shortage, he suggested that the Commandant's policy to discharge all WRs by 30 June be reversed. This would eliminate the problem of recalling individual Reservists and take care of the problem of pay since WRs on active duty were being paid from Regular Establishment funds.

Twenty-eight women were already being retained beyond the 30 June 1947 deadline to work on claims. "However," wrote General Clement, "claims cannot be settled until muster rolls are checked which justifies

the retention of the WRs in that section, and by the same token, those on duty in the Decorations and Medals Section are working to clean up the war load."⁴¹ He believed it was better to keep all WRs on active duty on a voluntary basis until the passage of permanent legislation to resolve the situation. To ease the embarrassment caused by the constant shifting of dates and policy changes it was rationalized that the 30 June 1947 date was originally set with the idea that permanent legislation covering the women would have been enacted by that time.

Following General Clement's suggestion, a week later in early June, General Shepherd recommended the retention of WRs rather than approve a request that several hundred enlisted men be transferred to Headquarters. Since the efficiency of each woman Reservist was considered to be far greater than that of the average enlisted man to be brought in, he feared a marked loss in work output with the proposed changeover.

Thus another last-minute reprieve for the women at Headquarters arrived on 9 June when the final demobilization deadline was changed to read, "... for a period of six months after the war is declared over or such shorter time as meets the requirements of the Marine Corps."⁴²

General Thomas once again asked that the previously published policy be strictly adhered to and that only the five officers actually working on the postwar program and the enlisted women kept as a result of the latest change be allowed to remain on active duty. He recommended that the other four women officers still on duty (Smith not included) be released as soon as their work was completed and that no more women officers be recalled except to fill a possible vacancy in the billets designated for the MCWR.* General Vandegrift's approving signature was a bittersweet victory, for next to the word, *approved*, he wrote "with the addition of one (1) WR officer for duty in the office of the J.A.G. [Judge Advocate General]."⁴³

*At the time of General Thomas' memo, there were 10 women officers on active duty: Major Hamblet and Lieutenant Hale working on MCWR plans; Captain Illich working on matters related to the women kept on active duty; Captain Elizabeth J. Elrod and Captain Durant at the WR company; Major Frances W. Pepper and Second Lieutenant Pauline F. Riley at the Post War Personnel Reorganization Board; First Lieutenant Marie K. Anderson in the Supply Department; and Captain Sarah M. Vardy and Captain Smith in the Division of Aviation.

In the files of the Director of Women Marines was found an undated, unsigned, brief history of the women in the Marine Corps which begins:

It is rumored that when it was announced that women were going to be enlisted in the Marine Corps that the air was colored with profanity in the language of every nation as the members of the old Corps gathered to discuss this earth-shaking calamity. It is entirely probable that the wailing and moaning which went on that day amongst the old Marines was never equalled—never, that is, until it was announced that the women Marines were going home. Then, with a complete reversal of attitude many of those same Marines declared that the women in their offices were essential military personnel and absolutely could not be spared from the office.⁴⁴

Stenographers Recalled

A severe shortage of clerk-stenographers brought

another demand for the recall of formerly active enlisted women Reservists. Few enlisted men were qualified and Civil Service was unable to fill the needs of Headquarters, so, in October 1947, 1,500 applications were mailed to women Reservists in the Volunteer Reserve. It came as a great surprise and disappointment when only 56 were returned—and of the number only 28 were considered qualified. The fact is that the letter soliciting applications was not very enticing. The maximum tour assured was for six months—the women could not request earlier release and the Marine Corps could not guarantee anything more.⁴⁵

Among the women recommended for recall were Staff Sergeant Lotus T. Mort, who later became the third woman warrant officer in 1954; Corporal Mildred A. Novotny, who was among the first eight enlisted

Col Katherine A. Towle cuts cake on the 6th anniversary in February 1949 of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. Mrs. Ruth Cheney Streeter looks on. In the background (from left to right) are TSgt Grace L. Benjamin, Cpl Emilie Pranckevich, TSgt Agnes T. Hirschinger, SSgt May Ann Henritze, MSgt Marie B. Benziger, and Sgt Elsie F. Futterman.



women to be sworn into the Regular Marine Corps on 10 November 1948; and Technical Sergeant Helen L. Hannah, who retired in 1975 with 32 years service as a Reservist. Lotus Mort recalled that she was a bit hesitant when her orders arrived on Christmas Eve, but on 5 January 1948, she reported for six months and

stayed for 17 years until her retirement in 1965. The poor response to the call for stenographers was the first indication that competent women needed to be assured of more security if they were going to leave their homes and good jobs. Colonel Knighton's prediction of 1946 had come to pass.

CHAPTER 2

Women's Armed Forces Legislation: Public Law 625

Women's Armed Forces Legislation—Provisions of Public Law 625

Women's Armed Forces Legislation

Nearly three years elapsed from the end of hostilities in August 1945 until legislation giving women regular military status was finally passed and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman on 12 June 1948. The drawn-out process, marked by gains and reverses along the way, was the cause of much of the uncertainty experienced by women Marines on duty at Headquarters. Without the legislation there was no security for those women, and no one knows how many competent WRs, who would have preferred a career in the Marine Corps, asked to be discharged simply because they could not afford to wait.

The proposed law received little support from the Commandant—and for some very good reasons. The Marine Corps had an authorized regular enlisted strength of 100,000 and then as now, operated on a limited budget. Understandably, neither the men nor the women wanted to sacrifice combat billets to make room for the women. General Vandegrift was heartily in favor of women as Regular Marines provided they would not count against his end strength; otherwise, he was unalterably opposed.

A study of the position taken by the other services regarding the women's bill reveals that the Army and the Navy intended to use large numbers of women in occupational fields not required in the Marine Corps. There was a strong case made, for example, for women in the medical field: nurses, Medical Corps WAVES, dental technicians, and laboratory technicians. Furthermore, they contended that these billets which were planned for the WAVES and the WACs would not affect overseas rotation of the men. This was not the situation in the Marine Corps.

The senior women officers, Colonels Streeter and Towle and Major Hamblet, were aware of the unique problems faced by the Commandant, and they were also conscious of the climate at Headquarters.* They recognized exactly how far the Marine Corps would

be willing to go and believed that a crusade by the women would have had negative results. The plan for a strong Women's Organized Reserve backed up by a Volunteer Reserve was a compromise that most Marines could accept, and this was the proposal they carried to Capitol Hill.

The Honorable Carl Vinson, on 29 March 1946, introduced H.R. 5919, "To amend the Naval Reserve Act of 1938, as amended, so as to establish the Women's Reserve on a permanent basis . . ." (79th Congress, 2d session). As the purpose clearly states, the bill was strictly a Reserve measure and in its original form allowed the Marine Corps only 50 officers and 450 enlisted women on active duty during peacetime. It was referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs and hearings were held on 9 and 10 May.

In her book, *Lady In The Navy*, Captain Joy Hancock notes, "The burden of presentation before that committee was carried largely by the members of the Women's Reserve who were not in a position of sufficient authority to speak with the necessary assurance of Navy plans and policies."¹ Colonel Towle, the Commandant's representative, prepared a short statement summarizing the plans for a Reserve organization with an active duty strength of 32 officers and 28 enlisted women—at the most.²

American military women enjoy a relationship of unusual cooperation. Perhaps it stems from the shared experience of being a minority in a previously all-male world. For whatever reasons, they have made it a point of honor to be mutually supportive. Accordingly, when the time came to testify before the committee, Colonel Towle was careful not to undermine the much stronger WAVE position.

After the initial hearings in the House, Admiral Denfeld enlisted the aid of Congresswoman Margaret Chase Smith, who had taken a public stand in favor of Regular status for service women. Mrs. Smith had been cautioned by the chairman, Carl Vinson, that her amendment to include Regular as well as Reserve status would kill the whole bill.³ Mrs. Smith's view was, "The Navy either needs these women or they do not. . . ."⁴

*Colonels Streeter and Towle, although no longer on active duty, were frequently consulted on matters relating to the postwar plans for the women in the Marine Corps.

As a result of the efforts of Admiral Denfeld and Mrs. Smith, a new draft was prepared which would extend the scope of existing laws governing the Regular Navy and Marine Corps to include women. For all that, time ran out before further action was taken. When the 79th Congress adjourned, the women's bill died in committee. Consequently, it would be necessary to begin fresh at the next session.

The women in the Army worked on a separate bill until the armed services were combined to become the Department of Defense. At that time, the women joined forces in order to present as strong a case as possible while allowing for the unavoidable differences.

Added to the varied duties assigned to Major Hamblet when she returned to active duty in the fall of 1946 was the task of tracking the pending legislation. Sandwiched between the planning of the postwar Reserve, and the vain attempt to demobilize the war-time WRs, she studied and commented on the women's bill and made occasional appearances before congressional committees. She was asked verbally by Colonel Pate to submit, "arguments against keeping women on active duty in the Marine Corps either as reservists on continuous active duty or as members of the Regular establishment." She did so in a 29 April 1947 memo, ending with the statement:

If it is decided that women shall be on active duty for an indefinite period of time, their rights should be protected by making them members of the Regular establishment of the Marine Corps rather than keeping them on continuous active duty as reservists.⁵

By the time the Senate subcommittee hearings of the 80th Congress began on 2 July 1947, the Navy bill S. 1529 and the Army bill S. 1103 were combined to form S. 1641. Most observers were certain that women were going to be made part of the Regular Armed Forces. General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower opened his testimony saying, "Not only do I heartily support the bill to integrate women into the Regular Army and Organized Reserve Corps, but I personally directed that such legislation be drawn up and submitted to this Congress."⁶ A critical shortage of infantrymen and the need to stabilize the Women's Army Corps prompted him to stress the urgency of action to the Congress.

General Eisenhower was followed by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz who said, "The real fact must be acknowledged that in any future war it will be mandatory to have at our command immediately all pos-



Congresswoman Margaret Chase Smith of Maine.

sible resources. Womenpower is one of them."⁷ It should be noted that the Allies made good use of women in the armed services in World War II.*

Colonel Knighton followed, reading a brief, two-sentence Marine Corps statement: "The previous witnesses have expressed the views of the Commandant; the Commandant of the Marine Corps is in favor of the bill and trusts that it will be enacted as soon as possible."⁸

*In an interview in October 1976 in Heidelberg, Germany, Albert Speer, Hitler's weapons production chief said: "How wise you were to bring your women into your military and into your labor force. Had we done that initially, as you did, it could have affected the whole course of the war. Women would have been far superior, for example, to our impressed labor force from occupied countries, which you called 'slave labor.' We would have found out, as you did, that women were equally effective, and for some skills superior to males. We never did, despite our critical manpower shortage in the late years of the war, make use of this great potential." (*San Diego Union*, 30Nov76).

The brevity and the wording of the statement cast some doubt on the Commandant's true feelings. In order to offset its negative effect at Headquarters, Colonel Knighton sent a memorandum to the Assistant Commandant, General Shepherd, along with a file of statements given before the Senate Armed Services Committee which he said:

... contain almost unrefutable arguments why: it is vital that women be integrated into the Regular Establishment of *all* services.

I informed the Senate Committee that the views expressed by these witnesses reflected the views of the Commandant.

As it has been rumored that the Commandant is opposed to having women in the Regular Marine Corps, it might be well to circulate these statements to the heads of all Departments and offices.⁹

Colonel Knighton was perhaps the strongest voice heard in the Marine Corps in favor of integration of the women. As legal aide to the Commandant, legislation was his responsibility but he seemed to go a step further in an effort to convince others of the need for this particular bill. He went so far as to testify at a Senate hearing in place of Major Hamblet when he feared that she, due to her own doubts, would not be convincing enough. The bill passed the Senate on 23 July 1947 and was sent to the House committee where it sat until the adjournment of the first session, but this time it would not be necessary to begin anew.

In anticipation of the enactment of the legislation, a board was convened in December 1947 to propose a program for women as Regular Marines. Keeping in mind that every woman in the Regular Marine Corps would be at the expense of a man, careful thought was given to their most efficient utilization. The study, therefore, provided for 65 officers and 728 enlisted women to be assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps, both at Henderson Hall and the Marine Corps Institute; offices of the directors of the Marine Corps Reserve Districts; Headquarters Recruiting Divisions; Department of Pacific and Depot of Supplies at San Francisco; Marine Corps Schools, Quantico; and to the Organized Women's Reserve Program.¹⁰

In February 1948 just before the House Armed Services Committee was scheduled to meet, Captain Ira H. Nunn of the Navy Judge Advocate General's office wrote to the Commandant asking for his help. In view of the considerable opposition to the bill, a strong presentation was deemed necessary, and plans were being made for appearances by the Secretary of Defense, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Naval Personnel, and the Deputy Surgeon General. The letter read:

Advice is requested as to whether the Commandant can appear in support of the bill It is understood that the Departments of the Army and Air Force will be represented by Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Spaatz, Devers, Paul, Armstrong, and Strothers.^{11*}

The Marine Corps was represented at those crucial hearings by Major Hamblet, who was introduced by Colonel Knighton.

The hearings were heated and prolonged, but the outcome seemed assured. To almost everyone's surprise, however, in early April, the committee reported out a measure which would have limited enlistment of women in the armed services to Reserve status only. During the debate, Margaret Chase Smith tried to get House approval of the Senate version, but only 40 members backed her while 66 were opposed. The opponents argued that, "Regular status for women in the military service now might result in a draft for women in another war and West Point would become a coeducational college."¹² The solution seemed to be to put women in a Reserve status.

The bill, S. 1641, then went into a joint conference by members of both the Senate and the House to reconsider the differences. Support came from patriotic organizations, professional and business women groups, and most importantly from the ranking military men of the day. Fleet Admiral Nimitz, Chief of Naval Operations, in backing the legislation said:

This legislation has been requested after careful study of the overall requirements of the Navy, now and in the future. It is the considered opinion of the Navy Department and my own personal belief that the services of women are needed. Their skills are as important to the efficient operations of the naval establishment during peacetime as they were during the war years.¹³

The bill that emerged from the joint conference established a Women's Army Corps in the Regular Army, authorized the enlistment and appointment of women in the Regular Navy and the Regular Marine Corps and the Navy and Marine Corps Reserve, and the

*General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower; General Omar N. Bradley, Chief of Staff of the Army; General Carl T. Spaatz, Commanding General, Army Air Forces; General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, Army Ground Forces; Lieutenant General Willard S. Paul, Director of Personnel Administration, General Staff, United States Army; Brigadier General Harry G. Armstrong, U.S. Army Air Forces, Commandant of the School of Aviation Medicine; Brigadier General Dean C. Strothers, U.S. Army Air Forces, Director of Military Personnel under Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel and Administration.

Regular and Reserve of the newly created Air Force in which the women would be known as WAFs (Women in the Air Force). Ten days later, 12 June 1948, President Truman signed the long-debated Women's Armed Services Integration Act, Public Law 625.

Provisions of Public Law 625

Generally, P. L. 625 gave equal status to women in uniform, but there were a number of restrictions and special provisions. While the law placed no limit on the number of women who could serve in the Reserves, it did specify that the number of women Regulars could not exceed two percent of the nation's total armed strength in the Regular Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. It provided for a gradual build-up which would allow the Marine Corps a strength of 100 officers, 10 warrant officers, and 1,000 enlisted women by June 1950. In fact the Marine Corps did not anticipate or want to fill the allotted quota.

Based upon a strong recommendation from Mrs. Streeter, the new law contained the provision that the Director of Women Marines would be detailed to duty in the office of the Commandant to assist the Commandant in the administration of women's affairs. Originally, she, like the WAVE director, would have been responsible to the Personnel Department. Mrs. Streeter, in response to a letter from General Vandegrift in August 1947, recalled her duty in the Personnel Department and the limitations under which she worked during the war. She gave great credit to the courtesy and cooperation of all the men at Headquarters with whom she worked, but she argued that the Director would be in a better position to deal with all branches, and that her cognizance over all women Marines and all matters affecting them would be recognized if she did not come under one particular branch.¹⁷ General Vandegrift agreed and the women's bill was amended before it came to the final vote. For all services, the director was to be selected from among the Regular women officers serving in the grade of major or above (lieutenant commander for the Navy) and would hold the temporary rank of colonel or Navy captain.

Promotion regulations loosely paralleled those of male components, except that women could not hold permanent rank above lieutenant colonel. Additionally, the number of Regular women lieutenant colonels could not exceed 10 percent of the number of Regular women officers on active duty—for ma-

jors, the law read 20 percent.* Inasmuch as lieutenant colonel was the senior grade that women officers could then hold (with the exception of the Director), non-promotion to this rank was not considered a passover. Women officers retired from the senior ranks upon reaching a mandatory retirement age which was for majors, 20 years or age 50, whichever came sooner, and for lieutenant colonel, 30 years service or age 55, whichever was sooner. The law also specified that women could not be assigned to duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions nor to vessels of the Navy other than transport and hospital ships.

Women were entitled to the same pay, leave, allowances, and benefits as men, but with an important proviso. Husbands would not be considered dependents unless they were in fact dependent on their wives for their chief support, and the children of servicewomen would not be considered dependents unless their fathers were dead or they were really dependent upon their mothers for their chief support. This apparently simple exception was the cause of much frustration and bitterness as the law was interpreted over the years. In effect, it negated many of the service benefits normally considered routine by the men. For example, quarters could not be assigned to a woman married to a civilian, nor could her husband shop at the post exchange or commissary store.**

The Marines especially appreciated the section of the law dealing with the Reserves for it made possible, at last, the much-discussed Organized Women's Reserve. Nearly two years had passed since Major Hamblet had been called to active duty to frame the postwar women's plans which, by this time, were laid out in great detail and ready for implementation.

Women were now a part of the Regular Marine Corps in spite of earlier opposition to this radical idea. In the spring of 1946, when the legislation was first introduced, no one, least of all the women themselves, ever thought in terms of Regular status. As time went on, however, there was increasing evidence that no real-

*The provision held up a number of promotions to field grade rank. In 1962, Captain Grace "San" Overholser Fields stayed on active duty longer than she intended after her marriage in order to keep up the strength figures of the Regular active duty women officers, thereby allowing Major Jeanette I. Sustad, a future Director of Women Marines, to be promoted to lieutenant colonel. (Grace Overholser Fields interview with HQMC).

**For a detailed discussion of marriage, motherhood, and dependent husbands, see Chapter 13.

ly effective and continuing nucleus of trained personnel could be counted on in the Defense Establishment unless some permanency was assured women who volunteered for training and assignment in peacetime.

The passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 recognized this fact and was a natural sequel to the excellent record of the women who served in World War II.



Col Ruth Cheney Streeter, wartime Director of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, before leaving her post recommended that the position be strengthened, a proposal which lead ultimately to the Marine Corps amendment to Public Law 625 and placement of the Director in the table of organization of the immediate office of the Commandant.

CHAPTER 3

Going Regular

*The Transfer Program—Establishing the Office and Title, Director of Women Marines
The First Enlisted Women Marines—The Pioneers—Reindoctrination of the Officers
Reindoctrination of Enlisted WMs—Designation of Women Marines
Recruit Training Established at Parris Island—The First Black Women Marines
Establishing the Women Officers' Training Class at Quantico*

The Transfer Program

The integration of women was now a *fait accompli*, and in Colonel Towle's view, "... the Marine Corps had, with varying degrees of enthusiasm but always in good grace, accepted the fact that women as potential 'careerists' in the Marine Corps must be reckoned with and provided for."¹ To this end, the first step was to find a suitable Director, but the process of transfer from Reserve to Regular could not wait for her selection, acceptance, and arrival.

Major Hamblet, still the Director of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, recommended Colonel Towle be named to that post. Although the press had announced that the services would probably retain the current directors, and certainly she was the one most familiar with the plans to be implemented, Major Hamblet recognized that her age and rank would work to her and ultimately to the women's disadvantage. There would be, she was certain, a good deal of opposition to the appointment to colonel—even on a temporary basis—of a 33-year-old woman with only five years of military experience.² Colonel Towle, on the other hand, was happily ensconced as the Assistant Dean of Women at the Berkeley campus of the University of California, and she felt that Major Hamblet should continue as Director.

General Clifton B. Cates, then Commandant, found himself in the uncomfortable and certainly unusual position of personally having to ask a woman to accept a Regular commission. In the summer of 1948, his aide called Colonel Towle to tell her that the Commandant was planning an official trip to California and wished to meet with her in San Francisco at the Saint Francis Hotel. At the ensuing interview, Colonel Towle was not prepared to make a definite commitment to return, but she and General Cates discussed details of organization and particularly the position of the Director and her access to the Commandant.³ The general agreed to consider her recommendations and to talk them over with his advisors at Headquarters. The outcome was the appointment of Colonel Katherine A. Towle as the first Director of Women Marines.

Admittedly, she was one of the women who originally had grave doubts about the need or even desirability of having women in the military during peacetime, but on thinking it over, she said, "the logic of the whole thing did occur to me: that this was sound. . . ."⁴ Any uncertainties she entertained were set aside once and for all when she returned to Washington in the fall of 1948, and she undertook her work determined to make the women truly integrated, contributing members of the Corps.

In July, while the matter of a director was still unsettled, letters containing information about the transfer program were sent to women Reservists and former women Reservists. The women were to be selected based upon their qualifications to fill the 65 officer and 728 enlisted billets. Of the 65 officers selected, 21 would receive Regular commissions and 44 would be assigned as Reservists on continuous active duty, presumably with the Organized Reserve companies.⁵

Since 18,000 enlisted women had served in World War II, it was not anticipated that nonveterans would be accepted for perhaps nine months to a year after the transfer program got underway. A continuing board would be convened at Headquarters to select applicants at the rate of 75 per month until the planned strength was reached. After that, several recruit classes per year would be conducted at Henderson Hall to compensate for losses due to normal attrition. It was estimated that no more than 200 recruits would be needed during the first two years.⁶

Former enlisted Reservists could enlist for two, three, or four years, and had to meet the following requirements: be 20-31 years old; have two years of high school or business school; be a citizen of the United States or its insular possessions; be married or single; have no children under 18 years of age regardless of legal custody; have no dependents; be able to pass the prescribed physical examination; and possess an honorable or under-honorable-conditions discharge. The deadline for receipt of applications was set at 15 September 1948.⁷

In the case of officers, the flow of promotions as well as available billets had to be considered. It was decided that the 21 initial selections for Regular sta-



On 4 November 1948, Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Clifton B. Cates administers the oath to the first three women to be sworn into the Regular Marine Corps, (left to right) LtCol Katherine A. Towle, Maj Julia E. Hamblet, and 1stLt Mary J. Hale.

tus should be allocated to: majors and above, two; captains, five; first lieutenants, seven; and second lieutenants, seven. All officers and former officers were sent letters similar to the ones used to solicit enlisted candidates. The promise of security in these was a bit vague in that they were told, "Subject to budgetary limitations and satisfactory performance of duty, applicants are assured at least a 3-year tour of duty. . . ." And following the details of the projected officer candidate class was written, "As these new officers are obtained, the Reserve officers on continuous active duty will be ordered to inactive duty."⁸

To be considered for transfer to the Regular Marine Corps, women officers had to have completed two years of accredited college work or pass an equivalent examination; be physically qualified; have no children under 18 years of age; and fit into a complicated age-grade structure which would protect them later from mandatory, involuntary retirement.

The enlisted selection board convened on 21 Sep-

tember with Colonel Lester S. Hamel as senior member. The first report, submitted on 4 October, recommended the approval of 142 applicants and the tentative approval of 45 others subject to age and physical waivers.⁹

It became increasingly apparent and by late September it was conclusive that the number of enlisted applicants was below expectation and the quota would not be reached. The cause of the disappointing response is a matter of speculation. First, there is no evidence that large numbers of women were interested in a military career. During the congressional hearings on the women's armed services legislation, the voice of the woman veteran was not heard. Then, the age group involved was vulnerable to marriage and motherhood, and while marriage itself was not a prohibiting factor to enlistment, it certainly was a deterrent. Finally, the physical standards were quite stringent and the age restrictions for officers were, at the very least, difficult. The women officers of World

War II were, by and large, older than average when compared to men of the same rank.

A Plans and Policy Division study of 24 September 1948 recommended that the grade distribution for officers be revised in light of the applications received; that the deadline for enlisted applications be extended to 1 January; that officer applications be forwarded to the board for consideration regardless of ineligibility for age or physical condition; that applications for new enlistments by nonveterans be authorized; and that recruit classes begin by 1 March 1949.¹⁰

Many of the recommendations were approved. The enlisted transfer program was extended and age and physical waivers were granted, but the problem of opening up the program to nonveterans was set aside. And, indeed, at the time it was a problem. The Marine Corps was not yet racially integrated and to open enlistments meant to face "the Negro question." Furthermore, it required the hasty establishment and staffing of a recruit training command for women.

In spite of the liberalized reenlistment procedures, less than 350 applications were received and about 25 percent of these came from WRs on duty at Headquarters.¹¹ Even as Colonel Towle arrived on 18 October, suggestions, plans, and recommendations for the reenlistment, recruitment, and training of women Marines were being discussed and changed almost daily. The paucity of applicants for the transfer program demanded new thinking.

The officer transfer program, for its part, moved relatively smoothly requiring only a few changes in rank distribution. On 26 October the names of the 21 Regular officers selectees were announced. The list included 1 colonel, 2 majors, 7 captains, and 11 first lieutenants. Not counting Colonel Towle, who had recently reported aboard, only Major Hamblet and Lieutenant Hale were on active duty at the time of selection. The initial list of women recommended for Regular commissions named:

Colonel Katherine A. Towle
Major Julia E. Hamblet
Major Pauline E. Perate
Captain Pauline B. Beckley
Captain Barbara J. Bishop
Captain Margaret M. Henderson
Captain Emma H. Hendrickson
Captain Elsie E. Hill
Captain Helen J. McGraw
Captain Nancy M. Roberts
First Lieutenant Kathleen J. Arney
First Lieutenant Eunyce L. Brink
First Lieutenant Ben Alice Day

First Lieutenant Frances A. Denbo
First Lieutenant Mary J. Fisher
First Lieutenant Jeanne Fleming
First Lieutenant Mary J. Hale
First Lieutenant Margaret S. Ordemann
First Lieutenant Pauline F. Riley
First Lieutenant Margaret L. Stevenson
First Lieutenant Jeanette I. Sustad¹²

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Cates, administered the oath to the first women to become Regular Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Towle, Major Hamblet, and Lieutenant Hale, in his office on 4 November 1948. On the previous day, Colonel Towle had been discharged as a colonel from the Marine Corps Reserve. Upon accepting a Regular commission, she was appointed a permanent lieutenant colonel, and then, assuming the position of director, she was promoted to the temporary rank of colonel once again.

*Establishing the Office and Title,
Director of Women Marines*

In an analysis of the wartime Marine Corps Women's Reserve written in 1945, the authors, very diplomatically, but very clearly, pointed out the handicap under which Colonel Streeter worked—as an advisor with no real authority of her own. The report explained:

. . . the first real problem confronting the Marine Corps was what to do with the Director, MCWR. There really did not seem to be much place for her. Certainly she could not "direct" anything without cutting squarely across all official channels and chains of command, and creating divided responsibility at all points.

Luckily, Colonel Streeter had great good sense, and a wonderful knack for getting along with people, for it was through the medium of friendly relations with department heads and commanding officers that she eventually gained their confidence so that . . . suggestions could be made to them with some hope of success.¹³

Colonel Streeter rightfully concluded that the middle of a war was no time to quibble over administrative and organizational details, but before leaving the Marine Corps, she respectfully made the recommendation that, ". . . a new study be made by the Division of Plans and Policies embodying the experience of this war as to the best possible use which can be made of a Director, MCWR, in case of another war," and "That her position be strengthened if this can be properly done within the structure of the Marine Corps."¹⁴

Colonel Streeter was ultimately responsible for the Marine Corps amendment to P. L. 625 which placed the Director in the table of organization of the im-

mediate office of the Commandant. While serving as Director of the MCWR between September 1946 and November 1948, Major Hamblet continually strived to maintain some degree of control over all matters that affected the women. When Colonel Towle was asked to return as the first Regular Director, the clarification of this one issue was a factor in her acceptance. Clearly, to the most senior women officers, the position of the Director of Women Marines was a matter of concern. This position was defined in a study of 20 October 1948 which stated:

In establishing the office and title of the senior woman Marine, consideration is given to the following:

(a) An important aspect is the field of public relations, involving contacts outside of the Marine Corps. To insure maximum prestige and effectiveness in these duties, it is necessary that the senior woman Marine hold a title which indicates a position of importance in the Marine Corps.

(b) This officer must have cognizance of all matters pertaining to women Marines, Regular and Reserve, even though such matters are handled by the appropriate Headquarters agency in the same manner as for other Marines. Assigning actual administration and control of women Marines to existing agencies precludes establishment of a separate divi-

sion or department to carry out such functions. Under these circumstances, the senior woman Marine could best exercise cognizance over matters in her sphere if she were established as an assistant to the Commandant for woman Marine matters. In this capacity she could initiate action on matters affecting women Marines or make recommendations on policies and procedures concerning them but prepared by other agencies.¹⁵

The recommendations were approved and the senior woman Marine was called the Director of Women Marines. Due directly to the efforts of Colonels Streeter and Towle and Major Hamblet between 1945 and 1948, the Director of Women Marines enjoyed a somewhat autonomous role, able to attend the Commandant's staff meetings in her own right, and able to bring to the Commandant or to a division head any conflict which she felt merited his attention.

The First Enlisted Women Marines

The enlisted WRs stationed at Headquarters lost no time in applying for Regular status, and, by November, Colonel Towle was most anxious that the 210 already selected women be sworn in as soon as possible

On 10 November 1948, the Commandant, Gen Clifton B. Cates, administers the enlistment oath to the first eight women sworn into the Regular Marine Corps, (left to right) MSgt Elsie J. Miller, TSgt Bertha L. Peters, SSgt Betty J. Preston, SSgt Margaret A. Goings, Sgt Mildred A. Novotny, TSgt Mary F. Wancheck, SSgt Anna Peregrin, and SSgt Mary E. Roche. Col Katherine A. Towle, Director of Women Marines, is at far right.



in order to generate some favorable publicity and interest. On the 173rd anniversary of the Marine Corps, 10 November 1948, the first eight women, all WRs on duty at Headquarters Marine Corps, were given the oath of enlistment by the Commandant. Seven of those women, Master Sergeant Elsie J. Miller, Technical Sergeants Bertha L. Peters and Mary F. Wancheck, and Staff Sergeants Margaret A. Goings, Anna Peregrin, Betty J. Preston, and Mary E. Roche, had been on continuous active duty since their enlistment for wartime service. The eighth, Sergeant Mildred A. Novotny, had responded to the call for stenographers made in late 1947. The eight new women Marines were enlisted at the same rank that they held in the Reserve.¹⁶

A WR at Headquarters during that period, retired First Sergeant Esther D. Waclawski, remembered that she had already spent two days in Separation Company when the transfer program was announced. She and her friend, Technical Sergeant Petrina "Pete" C. Nigro, rushed to the recruiting station on Pennsylvania Avenue to "join the Marines." Although on active duty, these women had to follow the same procedures as former WRs all over the country.¹⁷ Upon acceptance, they were issued the usual travel orders with the senior woman put in charge. Typical of the travel orders of the time was a set dated 17 November 1948 and addressed to Master Sergeant Alice Julia Connolly, which read:

Having been enlisted this date in the USMC-W, you will, when directed, take charge of the below named women and proceed this date to Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., where upon your arrival you and the women in your charge will report to the Commanding Officer thereat for duty.

Technical Sergeant Marion Olson Barnes
 Technical Sergeant Anna Marie Scherman
 Staff Sergeant June Virginia Andler
 Staff Sergeant Rose Mary Barnes
 Staff Sergeant Wilma Greifenstein
 Staff Sergeant Jeanette Marie Johnson
 Staff Sergeant Vera Eleanor Piippo
 Sergeant Ruby Alwilda Evans
 Sergeant Bertha Janice Schultz

As no transportation is involved none is furnished.¹⁸

Since it is safe to assume that a group of senior NCOs is not likely to get lost on the way to the battalion to which they are already attached, the orders must have been issued because "it is always done that way."

The Pioneers

The original band of women in the Regular Marine Corps, now to be known as WMs, must have been an adventuresome lot. They had little idea of what was in store for them, either in the way of assignments, length of service, or acceptance by the men of the Marine Corps. Colonel Margaret M. Henderson, later to be a Director of Women Marines, recalled that she applied more or less to see if she could make it. Lieutenant Colonel Elsie Eleanor Hill submitted her application with the thought in mind that she would probably be stationed at home, in Philadelphia, where she had spent her entire wartime tour.¹⁹ The Inspector-Instructor of the Reserve unit there told her of the plans for an organized platoon in the "City of Brotherly Love."

Lieutenant Colonel Emma Hope Hendrickson Clowers, reminiscing about her feelings when she was sworn into the Regular Marine Corps on 3 December 1948, said:

I think most women officers in the first group who came back as regular officers wondered how we would be received by the career Marines. . . . We knew there had been no lack of enthusiasm on the part of the men for the many thousands of us who enlisted during WW II to lend a hand and "FREE A MAN TO FIGHT"—our WW II motto. But that was quite a different situation from one in which we were returning as career officers and would inevitably be in competition with them in varying degrees. It therefore was with much pleasure and surprise that, through the efforts of a male officer and his men, I was made to feel that they were happy and proud to welcome me back in the Marine Corps as a regular officer. At that time I was completing some studies at the University of Southern California and was ordered to report to the CO, MB, NB, [Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Naval Base] Long Beach to be sworn into the Regular Marine Corps. The CO (Lieutenant Colonel Charles T. Hodges) put on a formal parade, with all his men in dress blues and held the swearing in ceremony on the parade grounds, followed by a reception in my honor. Pictures and a write-up appeared in two of the L.A. papers and in the USC paper. I think this first experience as a regular officer not only made me feel that I was again a part of the Marine Corps but also served to erase my doubts as to acceptance as a regular officer.²⁰

Reindoctrination of the Officers

In view of the long period of inactive service for most of the returning women—over two years for some—Colonel Towle planned a short reindoctrination course to be held at Henderson Hall. The one-time class of 17 of the new officers was scheduled for 13 to 17 December under the direction of Captain Il-

lich. Then one of these officers was to be selected to conduct similar training classes for the enlisted women to begin in January.²¹

Reindoctrination for the officers included classes in administration, naval law, military customs and courtesies, leadership, recruiting, and a discussion of the role of women in the Regular services. There was a myriad of administrative details to attend to and then there was the matter of "close order drill."

In her wisdom, Colonel Towle asked for an indoor hall where the officers could drill unobserved, and so the Post Theater at Henderson Hall became their drill field. But the colonel underestimated the drawing power of the sight of women officers in a military formation trying to recapture the marching precision of their "candidate days." Enlisted men crowded in the doorways and enlisted women filled the projection booth to watch the group in which, retired First Sergeant Betty Schultz remembered, "Each officer had a step of her own."²² To make matters worse, the floor was slippery and the women were self-conscious of their too short, and in some cases too tight uniforms in front of the onlookers and in particular in front of the handsome drill instructor, First Lieutenant William H. Lanagan, Jr., later to be a brigadier general.

Most of those women had never expected to return to the Marine Corps and were lucky if they had even one uniform as a souvenir of their days in the Corps. After the war, skirt lengths dropped drastically with the arrival of the fashion called "The New Look." Lengthening skirts became a major preoccupation. "We were very interested in looking each other over to see how we managed to put together a uniform," recalled Colonel Henderson. Like the other tall women, her only recourse had been to insert a piece of fabric just below the skirt waistband. This meant, of course, that she could never remove her jacket.²³

They had the opportunity to order new uniforms from the tailor during the week of reindoctrination, but there was no solution to the problem of the fashionable longer skirts hanging several inches below the short overcoats. Major General William P. T. Hill, the Quartermaster General, insisted upon depleting the wartime supply of uniforms before ordering new ones but later he relented and bought longer skirts which, of course, did not match the five-year-old jackets.²⁴

It is likely, believing that they had seen the last of the women, that the Marines sold WR uniforms to surplus dealers after the war. Although no documents

have been found to prove it, the evidence is convincing. When P.L. 625 was finally signed by President Truman, a surplus dealer came to Headquarters and offered to sell WR uniforms to Lieutenant Hale. There is a well-known story of a former woman Reservist shopping in a Pittsburgh department store and finding all the elevator operators dressed in Marine uniforms complete with the distinctive buttons. But perhaps the worst incident of all is the one told by Colonel Hamblet. Among the novelties for sale by a concessionaire at the circus was a woman Marine uniform hat. There was but one displayed and she bought it.²⁵

Next to the uniform problem, the officers in that first group were confronted by the postwar Washington housing shortage. Although some expected to be permanently stationed in the area, others knew that their stay was temporary. Tired of paying exorbitant rates in a downtown hotel, about 10 of them rented several unfurnished apartments in Shirlington (Arlington, Virginia), a few miles from Marine Corps Headquarters. Captain Hill, the OIC (Officer in Charge) of the enlisted reindoctrination program, was able to borrow cots, dressers, and mess tables from Headquarters Battalion, Henderson Hall, and thus allow the women to set up "squadbays" in the empty apartments. A card table and chairs were loaned by newly arrived Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, when his secretary, June Hendrickson, joined the group.²⁶

Reindoctrination of Enlisted WMs

Beginning in January 1949, Captain Hill supervised a series of enlisted reindoctrination classes and had an office at Henderson Hall. The women had to be issued uniforms, reclassified, and given refresher classes in military subjects. As with the officers, much time was spent on administrative matters such as allotments, savings bond purchases, issuance of new identification cards and tags (dog tags), photographs, and physicals. The WMs attended the five-day class in groups of 15 and were billeted in the former dispensary during the course.

Twenty-seven women Reservists living on the west coast were selected for transfer to Regular status and Captain Illich went to the Headquarters of the Department of Pacific in San Francisco in late January to conduct their training on the spot. In a letter to the commanding general, Major General Leroy P. Hunt, Colonel Towle explained the reindoctrination course and made assurances that Captain Illich could handle it with a minimum of effort on the part of the

general's staff. She also told him of her intention to assign First Lieutenant Margaret Stevenson to the Department of Pacific. Tactfully, she wrote:

As you probably know, it was always the policy in the MCWR to have at least one woman officer detailed to duty at a post or station where enlisted women were serving, who in addition to her regular assignment, could have general supervision over their welfare, appearance, etc. and to whom they could go for advice and information if they wanted to. I believe such a policy is sound and highly desirable for many reasons.

Lieutenant Stevenson has had Quartermaster training, but can, I feel certain, do almost any kind of administrative work. She had an excellent record as a Reserve officer, is most conscientious and sincere, and very pleased with her assignment. I am sure you too will be pleased to have such a competent woman officer as our first "regular" representative in your Headquarters. Since she comes from California, she is as amazed as she is pleased that the Marine Corps is sending her back there for duty.

Forgive this long letter, but I thought this information might be of interest and assistance to you in your consideration of plans for the coming invasion of Women Marines.²⁷

While the Director of Women Marines personally selected women officers with specific billets in mind, she was totally aware that assignment is a command prerogative and that she had no authority once the woman reported to her duty station. Colonel Towle, in her gracious way, developed the peacetime women's organization in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition with the male Marines. After the initial doubts and outright opposition to the integration of women, it came as a pleasant surprise when the men not only tolerated the female presence but went out of their way to help them get established.

Designation of Women Marines

A Marine Corps Memorandum, dated 16 November 1948, directed that women entering the Regular Marine Corps be referred to as "Women Marines," with "USMC-W" as the short title or reporting form. The identification of Reservists would be "USMCR-W."²⁸ Colonel Towle took great exception to the "W" and the proper designation of women Marines became one of her first priorities. She suggested an alternative in a memorandum which stated:

It is believed the apparent inconsistencies can be resolved if the "W" as indicator of a woman Marine were used with the service number rather than as a component designator. For example: Second Lieutenant Jane Doe, USMC (W050123) (0105) or for a reservist, Sergeant Jane Doe, USMCR (W755123) (0143). This is clear and concise, and

would be used in every instance in official correspondence, orders, records, and publications where the service number is customarily indicated. It would also be evidence, which the Director of Women Marines considers important for the morale and prestige of the women, that women are an integral part of the Marine Corps or the Marine Corps Reserve, and not relegated to a specially constituted women's component as USMC-W and USMCR-W imply.²⁹

Her plan met with some opposition. While one staff comment noted the naval tradition to identify non-combatant components; for example, Captain Joe Doe (MC), another suggested the idea could be carried to the extreme and cooks would be designated Corporal Joe Doe, USMC-C. Written, staffed, and rewritten, the recommendation was finally approved on 17 March 1950 and thereafter the "W" was placed before the serial number of women Marines.³⁰

In the same vein, Colonel Towle preferred the word "women" to "female," and in her comments on a proposed order regarding officer promotion examination, she wrote:

The use of "female" instead of "women" in referring to the distaff side of the Marine Corps was gone into quite thoroughly when the new Marine Corps Manual was written. It was finally agreed upon that "women" would be the accepted terminology even when used as an adjective, e.g., "Women Marines," "women officer," etc. The usage follows that established in Public Law 625, "Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948." From a purist's point of view "female" may be correct when used as a counterpart of male, but from a woman's point of view it is very objectionable. I would appreciate, therefore, having reference to "female" deleted and "women" substituted

This sounds a little like "the battle of the sexes." It won't be unless we are called "females"!³¹

Recruit Training Established at Parris Island

The idea that only 200 new recruits would require basic training during the first two years was soon abandoned. On 29 November 1948, even before the transfer program was completed, Colonel Towle was investigating the possibility of conducting woman recruit training at Parris Island, South Carolina. Because the majority of women Marines would have to be recruited from among civilians, and because of the numbers involved, Henderson Hall was no longer considered suitable. Not only was it too small, but it was not considered the type of Marine Corps post whose mission and atmosphere would help instill the desired *esprit de corps* and pride which distinguish Marine recruits. To strengthen her case, Colonel Towle pointed out the convenience of having several appropriate specialist schools at Parris Island since training beyond



Capt Margaret M. Henderson (right) reads the order activating the 3d Recruit Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, in February 1949.

basic military indoctrination would be essential if the WMs hoped to attain the mobilization objective of being a skilled group ready for expansion in case of war.³² Happily, Major General Alfred H. Noble, Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, gave his unqualified support to the idea.

Captain Margaret M. Henderson was selected to head up recruit training. With no more written guidance than a piece of paper on which was typed the general training plan, she and several members of her staff went to work at a long table outside Colonel Towle's office on the first floor of Marine Corps Headquarters.³³ Lieutenant Colonel Mary Hale, who as a lieutenant was assigned as training officer to the embryo command, believed that, "Margaret Henderson was the perfect choice" to establish recruit training. She had had extensive teaching experience in civilian schools and was OIC of the Marine Corps Institute Business School during the war.³⁴

In early January, Captain Henderson accompanied Colonel Towle to Parris Island to inspect the available facilities and to discuss the proposed training schedule. The women were assigned Building 902 in the

same area used by World War II WRs. They would share the mess hall, Building 900, and the administration/gymnasium facilities, building 914, with other activities, primarily the Recruit Depot's Instruction Company.

Captain Henderson arrived at Parris Island for duty on 25 January with Lieutenant Arney who was on temporary duty to set up the WM uniform shop. By the end of the month Lieutenants Hale, Fisher, and Sustad reported and by mid-February the enlisted women were on the island, and all were attached to Headquarters Company, H&S Battalion. The roster included:

- Captain Margaret M. Henderson, Commanding Officer.
- First Lieutenant Jeanette I. Sustad, Executive Officer.
- First Lieutenant Mary J. Hale, Training Officer; Security Officer.
- First Lieutenant Mary J. Fisher, Police & Property Officer; Special Services Officer.
- First Lieutenant Kathleen J. Arney, Temporary duty connected with WM uniform matters.
- Master Sergeant Elsie J. Miller, Sergeant Major.
- Technical Sergeant Bertha L. Peters, Chief Clerk.
- Technical Sergeant Barbara A. Ames, Special Services NCO.
- Staff Sergeant June V. Andler, Pay Clerk.

Staff Sergeant Dorothy T. Hunt, Instructor.
 Staff Sergeant Dorothy E. Sullivan, Platoon Sergeant.
 Sergeant Margaret K. Leier, Instructor.
 Sergeant Marie A. Proulx, Correspondence Clerk.
 Sergeant Ruth Ryan, Police Sergeant.
 Sergeant Bertha J. Schultz, Platoon Sergeant.
 Sergeant Agnes C. Thomas, Duty NCO.
 Sergeant Ardella M. Wheeler, Quartermaster Clerk.
 Sergeant Mary E. Zabriskie, Platoon Sergeant.
 Corporal Rosa V. Harrington, Instructor.
 Corporal Grace M. Karl, Instructor.³⁵

Although set up like a battalion and so designated, the 3d Recruit Training Battalion, the unit in no way resembled a battalion in size. A visiting Army general saw the "battalion" led by a captain and remarked, "Now I've seen everything!" The organizational plan was deliberate, however, and was based on General Noble's desire that the senior woman Marine on the depot, Captain Henderson, have disciplinary control over all women Marines at Parris Island. Captain Henderson was designated his advisor on mat-

ters concerning WMs and as such was a member of his special staff.³⁶

The six-week training schedule for women recruits was organized into eight periods daily Monday through Friday and four periods on Saturday for a total of 264 hours. The objectives were stated as:

- 1) To give basic Marine Corps indoctrination to women who have no previous experience.
- 2) To give the women information on the part the Marine Corps played in our national history and its place in the current National Military Establishment.
- 3) To classify each individual to fill an available billet according to her abilities.
- 4) To develop in each individual a sense of responsibility, an understanding of the importance of teamwork, and a desire for self-improvement and advancement in the Marine Corps.³⁷

With those objectives in mind, the 20 women went to work preparing the barracks and classroom; writing lesson plans, recruit regulations, and battalion orders; making out training schedules and coordinating

Future Director of Women Marines, 1stLt Jeanette I. Sustad (standing second from left), is photographed with the original staff of the 3d Recruit Training Battalion, Parris Island.





Platoon sergeants SSgt Dorothy E. Sullivan (left) and Sgt Betty J. Schultz (right) with the first platoon to undergo training at the 3d Recruit Training Battalion, Parris Island.

their plans with all the depot facilities that supported recruit training. The barracks needed little renovation, but they had to be scrubbed and shined to meet the standards of distaff Marines. Sergeant Ryan ordered bunks, locker boxes, linen, and supplies and her job was made easier by the depot supply people who saved their best for the 3d Battalion. Sergeants Schultz and Sullivan arranged squadbays. Several of the enlisted women had some college background, and they went to work writing lesson plans. Lieutenant Hale, a self-described "pack rat," made good use of orders and schedules she had saved from her wartime tour at the WR school at Camp Lejeune, and the Marines of Instruction Company under the command of Major Gerald T. Armitage helped in all facets of the preparation.³⁸

The enlisted staff—all ranks from master sergeant to corporal—was billeted on the lower deck of Building 902. Recruits would eventually occupy an upper squadbay. In addition to everything else, the women prepared themselves for this important assignment by practicing close order drill in an empty upper squadbay. They had no other training, and they were as ap-

prehensive about meeting the recruits as the recruits were about meeting them.³⁹

The drill instructors were selected from among male Marines with experience on the drill field. Staff Sergeant Jack W. Draughon had been a D.I. for two years when Lieutenant Colonel Herman Nickerson, Jr., asked him if he would be interested in the job with the 3d Battalion. After a careful screening by Captain Henderson, Staff Sergeant Draughon, Sergeant Payton L. Lee, and Corporal Paul D. Lute were assigned as the drill instructors. Sergeant Draughon remembered very clearly his first interview with Captain Henderson. It was strange in those days to sit across from a Marine captain answering, "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am." Leaving her office, he met Lieutenant Colonel Nickerson and Colonel Russell N. Jordahl in the passageway and Colonel Jordahl said, "So you're going to be the D. I. for the women Marines?" to which Draughon answered "Yes, ma'am." The story quickly made the rounds and Marine artist Norval E. Packwood immortalized the incident in a "Leatherneck" cartoon.⁴⁰

The male drill instructors taught close order drill,

first aid, chemical warfare, and classes on general orders. At first they had to endure some goodnatured harassment when they took the recruits outside the battalion area, and Marines taunted them with, "Hey Sarge, your slip is showing." To avoid snickers and kidding, Sergeant Draughon often got the platoon going and then stepped up on the sidewalk and walked as if alone, but with one eye on his recruits.⁴¹

While the staff was still readying itself at Parris Island, the Marine Corps formally announced on 13 January 1949 that enlistment was open to nonveterans. General requirements were somewhat stricter than those for WRs who transferred from Reserve to Regular in that recruits had to be single, had to be high school graduates, and had to be approved by a board, convened quarterly, at Headquarters Marine Corps. Private Connie J. Lovil of Locksburg, Arkansas, was the first woman Marine recruit to arrive—reporting in on the day the battalion was formed, 23 February.⁴² Retired First Sergeant Betty Schultz remembers being "scared as all heck," when going to Port Royal to meet the first contingent of recruits. She and Sergeant Dottie Sullivan were the platoon sergeants of Platoon 1A which began training on 2 March, donned its uniforms for the first time on the 11th, and graduated on Tuesday, 12 April.⁴³

Colonel Towle came down from Headquarters as the guest of General Noble and together they attended the ceremonies which included an outdoor inspection, marching to the accompaniment of the Parris Island Drum and Bugle Corps, and the traditional speeches in the classroom. Of the 30 graduating recruits, 15 remained to attend Personnel Administration School and the rest were sent directly to Headquarters for duty.⁴⁴

The First Black Women Marines

It is rumored that several black women "passed" as white and served in the MCWR, but, officially, the first black women Marines enlisted during the summer of 1949 and joined the 3d Recruit Training Battalion on 10 September. Platoon 7 therefore is believed to be one of the first racially integrated Marine Corps units since, at the time, black male Marines were segregated and trained separately.⁴⁵

The press had often questioned Colonel Towle on the Marine Corps policy regarding black women, and she answered that they would be recruited the same as whites. During the congressional hearings, after the war, Representative Adam Clayton Powell of New York had made quite an issue of the fact that no black women had served in the MCWR. It was a serious matter

complicated by the southern tradition of segregation. The number of black women Marines was sure to be too few to allow for any type of separate facilities and no one was quite certain how white women, unaccustomed to mixing with blacks, would react to an integrated barracks situation.

Colonel Towle called Captain Henderson and told her that she would not send one black woman, by herself, to Parris Island—this out of consideration for the woman. Captain Henderson and Lieutenants Sustad and Hale discussed what they foresaw as potential problems, and they decided to assign bunks to the incoming platoon geographically rather than alphabetically—northern recruits at one end of the squadbay and southern recruits at the other. They told no one of the plan, including the platoon sergeants, and according to First Sergeant Schultz, they were completely unaware that the precaution had been taken.⁴⁶

A more frivolous concern was the beauty shop. The white hairdressers from Beaufort did not know how to do the black women's hair, and it is doubtful that they would have been willing to do it in any case. Both Captain Henderson from Texas and Lieutenant Hale from Georgia knew that the recruits would need special preparations and equipment but neither was quite certain what they were. They enlisted the help of the black maid who worked in the Women Officers' Quarters to buy the necessary supplies.⁴⁷ When she had completed all arrangements, Captain Henderson called in the staff and gave a stern warning that if anyone treated these recruits differently from the others, they would answer to her.

Ann Estelle Lamb of New York City, whose enlistment contract was signed by Major Louis H. Wilson, Jr., a future Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Annie E. Graham of Detroit arrived on the same day, and from all accounts their boot training was uneventful.⁴⁸ Although both women were from northern cities they undoubtedly understood the time and the place, and they did not complain, for example, about fixing their own hair, after hours in Lieutenant Hale's office.

No one connected with recruit training at the time remembers any unpleasantness and, in fact, Colonel Henderson now believes that the separation of the southerners from the blacks was unnecessary. She does recall, however, that the curiosity of the entire depot was piqued and that all eyes were on Platoon 7. Wherever they went, Marines, including the commanding general, were at the window to stare.⁴⁹

Occasionally, recruits attended football games in Savannah, drawing lots for tickets. As chance would have it, Privates Lamb and Graham were among the lucky recruits one weekend and everyone took a deep breath as blacks and whites left together on their way to the segregated stadium. Again all went well.^{50*}

Private Lamb remained at Parris Island to attend the Personnel Administration School where she finished first in a class of 61. Now a student rather

*See Henry I. Shaw, Jr., and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1975), p. 56 for a discussion of General Noble's attitude towards integration while he was the Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C.

than a recruit, she went on liberty, but it was somewhat inconvenient outside of the depot. Many years later, Colonel Henderson met a woman who had been in charge of the USO at Beaufort during the period, and the woman told her of an incident concerning a WM who called to make reservations for roller skating, but she said that there would be a Negro with the group and if she was not welcome, none of them would come.⁵¹

The third black woman Marine, enlisted in Chicago in 1950, was Annie L. Grimes, destined to become a warrant officer in 1968 and the first black woman officer to retire after a full 20-year career.⁵² From the beginning, black and white women Marines trained and lived together. Accounts differ as to whether the

Pvt Annie L. Grimes, the third black woman to join the Marine Corps and destined to become the first black woman officer, with her recruit platoon at Parris Island, in 1950.



blacks were subjected to discrimination, but there is general agreement among active duty and former WMs that any discrimination or harassment directed at the black women was always a case of individual personalities and never a case of organizational bias.*

*Establishing the Women Officers'
Training Class at Quantico*

After the initial selection under the so-called transfer program, the only source of women officers was through the commissioning of second lieutenants who successfully completed the Women Officers' Training Class. The class, which vaguely resembled the male Platoon Leaders Course, was conducted at the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico. WOTC, as it was known, was the responsibility of the Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools and fell under the operational control of the Education Center and the administrative control of Headquarters Battalion.

The class, held only in the summer, was divided into two six-week periods: the first a junior course; and the second a senior course. College graduates and seniors would attend both sessions, juniors would attend only the junior course, and qualified enlisted women were scheduled only for the senior course. Successful candidates who held a bachelor's degree and who were at least 21 years old would be commissioned second lieutenants in the Marine Corps Reserve. Only seven honor graduates would be offered Regular commissions and these would then attend an additional eight-week Women Officers' Basic Indoctrination Course (WOIC) to be held at the Basic School. The

Reservists could request assignment to continuous active duty, but most would return home in an inactive status.

Each session was limited to about 50 candidates who were at least 18 years old; single; citizens of the United States; and college graduates, or in the case of undergraduates, regularly enrolled in an accredited school and pursuing a course leading to a degree. Enlisted women and former WRs who were college graduates or who could pass a college educational equivalency examination were encouraged to apply.⁵³

Publicity for the program began in April 1949 but there were no pamphlets, posters, mailing lists, or other procurement aids. The recruiters' teams for the Platoon Leaders Course brought mimeographed information sheets to the coeducational schools they visited, but it was very late in the season for a class beginning in June. The first woman officer procurement officer was, in effect, Colonel Towle herself, who made a three-week tour in May of women's colleges in the northeast and southeast to acquaint the colleges and the students with the program.⁵⁴

Captain Hill was selected to head the WOTC staff of four officers and six enlisted women, all temporarily assigned to Quantico and attached to the Schools Company, Headquarters Battalion. Captain Hill and Lieutenant Eunyce L. Brink left Headquarters on 20 April for the five-month tour. Colonel Towle wrote long, explanatory letters to Captain Nita Bob Warner and Lieutenant Doris V. Kleberger, both Reservists, and asked them to join the staff. In her letter to Lieutenant Kleberger she wrote:

While on active duty your base pay would be that of a first lieutenant. In case you have forgotten, \$200.00 is a first lieutenant's pay. You would also, of course, be entitled to any longevity which you have earned. For every three years this is a 5 per cent increase. By this time, you must be very close to the second pay period, or 6 years. You would also draw the customary \$21.00 a month subsistence. As you would be in Government quarters at Quantico you would not draw quarters allowance.

Naturally, I have no way of knowing whether you are in a position to consider this proposition, or even whether you are interested. I can only hope for both, as I know you would help immeasurably in this important venture. I also think it could give you not only satisfaction in a job well done but afford you a rather pleasant and profitable occupation for the next few months. I would not, however, want to interfere with any future plans you may have made, or to have you sacrifice the permanency of a civilian occupation for temporary duty with the Marine Corps. Whether there would be opportunity for you to continue in a Reserve billet after this summer job is finished is something I cannot predict

*"I find it hard, in 1980, to look back on those days. But it was a fact of life during the years 1949 and 1950. My friends today are just friends, whether white or black. But I was just as guilty as anyone in the change process. I can recall that at MCAS, Cherry Point, I was very much concerned about the acceptance and/or treatment of my Negro enlisted women, who arrived in 1950 to become a part of WMD-2. It all worked out—thanks to the wisdom of Sgt Major Alice J. Connolly and T. Sgt Katherine O'Keefe—two superb human beings.

When I learned that two Negro women would be reporting to my command, I was concerned. But I consulted my trusty Sgt Major Alice J. Connolly, and together we decided on a course of action. They would be billeted in an area with T. Sgt O'Keefe, a devout Christian woman, and if there were any problems, they would be referred to the Commanding Officer. How antiquated this decision now seems to be! But in retrospect, it was important that we placed the two Negro women in areas where there would be minimal or no rejection—and, of course it worked. We had no problems." Col Helen A. Wilson comments on draft manuscript, dtd 1Jan80.



Col Joseph C. Burger, commander of The Basic School, awards regular commissions to members of the first Woman Officer Training Class, 1949: Virginia M. Johnson, Essie M. Lucas, Anna F. Champlin, Eleanor M. Bach, Doris V. Kleberger, Betty J. Preston.

right now. For a limited time there might be, but I don't want to hold that out as an inducement.⁵⁵

At the time, both Captain Warner and Lieutenant Kleberger were graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, and were personally known to Colonel Towle. Luckily for the woman Marine program, a number of competent WRs and former WRs were in school during that period and could afford to take a chance on a temporary assignment. Lieutenant Brink, a Regular officer, was temporarily detached from her duties as administrative assistant to the Director of Women Marines in order to be platoon leader. The staff was completed by Technical Sergeant Janet R. Paterson, Technical Sergeant "A" Fern Schirmer, Staff Sergeant Mary S. Cookson, Sergeant Rosalie C. Evans, Corporal Helen C. Cathcart, and Corporal Anna M. Delaney.⁵⁶ Most of the instruction

was done by male officers from the staffs of the Basic School, Junior School (later Amphibious Warfare School), and Senior School (later Command and Staff College). Colonel James T. Wilbur and his staff at the Education Center worked very closely with Captain Hill in developing a syllabus, schedules, and lesson plans.⁵⁷

The women were quartered in the old WR area overlooking the Potomac. The candidates and the enlisted staff were assigned to Barracks 3076 which was used as a dependents' school during the winter. The NCOs, on the lower deck, had a lounge and private rooms—the candidates were billeted in squad rooms on the

Capt Elsie E. Hill, officer-in-charge, conducts Saturday morning personnel inspection of the first Woman Officer Training Class, Quantico, Virginia in 1949.



second deck. The four women officers lived nearby in Married Officers' Quarters, Building 3078, which was an apartment building converted from a barracks. It was unheard of at the time for women officers to live in bachelor officers' quarters, so they were given a three-bedroom apartment in the quarters reserved for married lieutenant colonels and colonels. Few colonels wanted to live in the building, yet there was some healthy grumbling about giving junior women Marines a field grade apartment.⁵⁸

In spite of the late start and the lack of recruiting material, 180 completed applications were received, and 67 candidates from 35 colleges began the junior course on 10 June 1949. They were welcomed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools, Major General Shepherd, who told them he personally felt there was a "definite place for women Marines during peace, as there was during war," and he encouraged them to try for the Regular commissions.⁵⁹ General Shepherd had already given convincing evidence of his positive view toward women in the Marine Corps with his efforts to keep WRs on duty after World War II. In recalling the period, Lieutenant Colonel Hill stated emphatically that the women could not have managed the officer training on such short notice without the "marvelous support" of the male Marines at Quantico, especially General Shepherd. He took an active interest in their training, often appearing during a drill period, where as a perfect southern gentleman he always removed his hat when speaking to a woman Marine—no matter what her rank.⁶⁰

The first WOTC graduation exercises were held on 9 September 1949 in the auditorium of the Amphibious Warfare School, Junior Course. Thirty-four candidates were recommended for commissions: 18 immediately and 16 pending the receipt of a bachelors' degree. A quota of seven Regular commissions was allowed. Those to be appointed Regular officers were:

Eleanor M. Bach
 Essie M. Lucas (former WR; later Dowler)
 Joan Morrissey
 Betty J. Preston (among the first enlisted WRs sworn into the Regular Marine Corps on 10 November 1948)
 Anna F. Champlin
 Virginia M. Johnson (later Sherman)⁶¹

The seventh and last one was given to Lieutenant Kleberger, who was in competition with the candidates in her platoon. In a 1977 letter to the History and Museums Division, Lieutenant Colonel Kleberger wrote:

While serving on the staff, my interest in remaining in the Marine Corps became very intense. I discovered that I met all "requirements for commissioning" (including age . . . less than 27 on 1 July of the year of commissioning) with the exception of the requirement that I be a graduate of WOTC. I requested commissioning in accordance with existing regulations, requesting that "graduation from WOTC" be waived in that I was a platoon leader and certainly possessed the required training. Additionally, in view of my six years in the Marine Corps Reserve, I requested appointment to the rank of first lieutenant (a request that was not granted).⁶²

This case was repeated in 1950 when Lieutenant Elaine T. Carville, then on continuous active duty, asked to be transferred to the Regular Marine Corps. Since there were so few vacancies and they were viewed as recruiting incentives, the Procurement Branch opposed the idea of giving Regular appointments to former WR officers. Having approved Lieutenant Kleberger's case just a year earlier, Colonel Towle felt that Lieutenant Carville should have the same opportunity to compete for a regular commission. Her comments included:

Unfortunately, there is nothing that I can find to prevent former WR officers from applying for regular commissions providing they meet all requirements, including that of age. When the directive concerning the "transfer" program was written this loophole was apparently not considered. Actually because of the age requirement I doubt if we will have many, if any, more such requests; most of the MCWR officers are already too old even with service adjusted age. Carville herself just got under the wire.

Since the WOTC had been set up as the sole means of procuring regular women officers, I would not approve of Carville not being required to take some training. It might be possible to assign her as a platoon commander as we did Kleberger last summer, which could excuse her from attending the WOTC, or her present duties as Assistant Inspector-Instructor of an organized reserve platoon might be considered equivalent training. Certainly, however, she should be required to attend the two months of additional indoctrination if selected for a regular commission as second lieutenant. . . .

Fortunately, Lieutenant Carville is, I understand from various sources, a capable officer, and if selected would probably be a credit to the Marine Corps. But if her request is approved she should be given to understand:

- (1) That she will compete with WOTC graduates on an equal basis, with no prior assurance of selection.
- (2) That she can in no event receive a regular commission higher than second lieutenant.
- (3) That she would have to complete such basic indoctrination as the Marine Corps prescribes.⁶³

These women, Doris Kleberger and Elaine Carville, both retired lieutenant colonels, were the only former WRs who had to take a demotion upon transfer to

the Regular Marine Corps. Captain Warner, the assistant OIC that summer at Quantico, did not meet the age requirements for transfer and remained a Reservist. During the Korean War, another integration program opened, and she was able to integrate without losing any rank.

A problem surfaced in 1953 when Lieutenants Kleberger and Carville found:

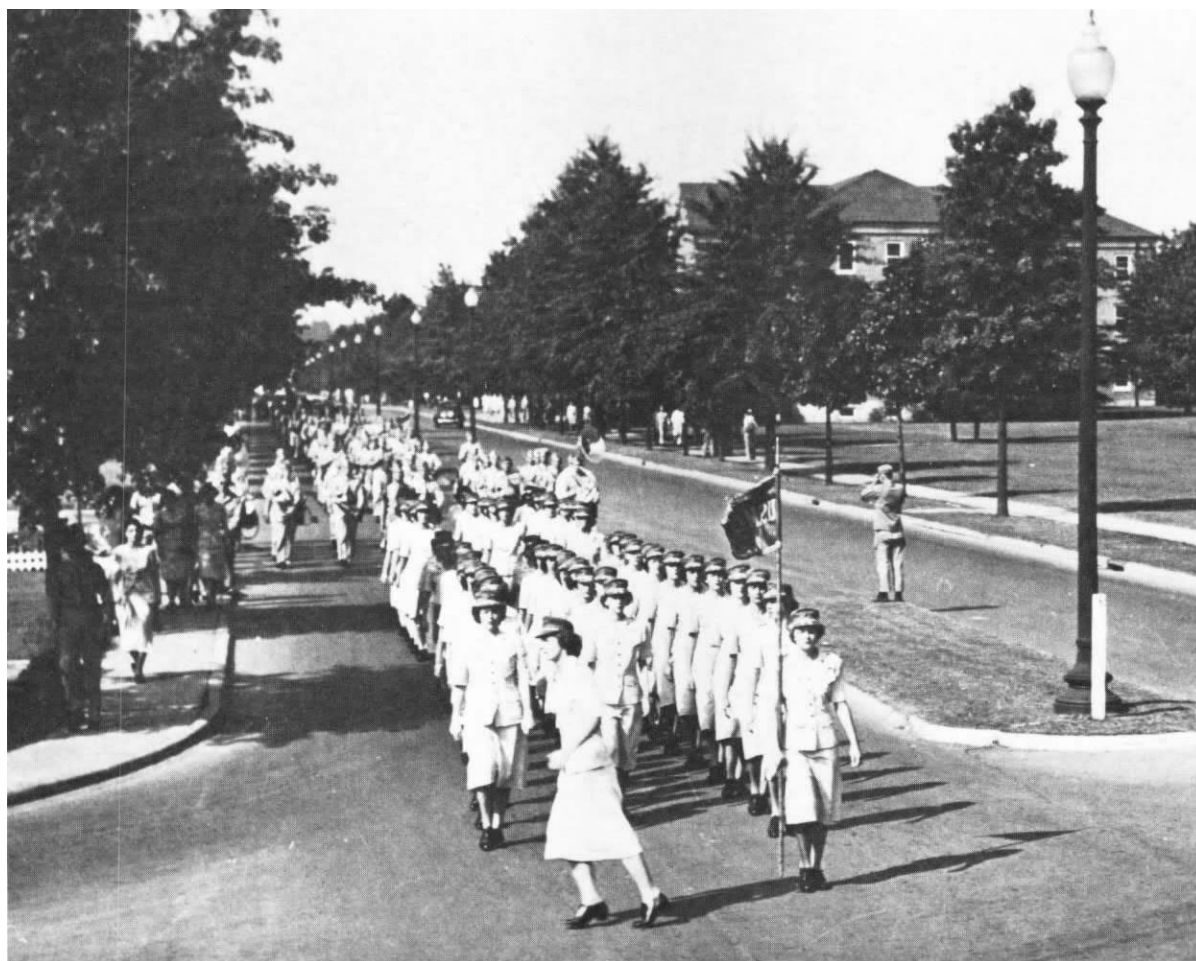
... that we were subject to separation from the Marine Corps under P.L. 625 because of the loophole in the law that neither the Marine Corps nor either of us considered when accepting commissions as second lieutenants with date of rank of 1949 and 1950, respectively. Basically, this provided for the separation of officers who had completed seven years of active commissioned service, regular and *reserve*, and who had not been selected for the rank of Captain. JAG ruled that we could not eliminate our reserve active time and there was no way we could become eligible for Captain before

reaching that seven years of active commissioned service. This eventually required seeking relief from the Board of Correction of Naval Records and subsequent reassignment of date of rank to provide eligibility for the rank of Captain before mandatory separation.⁶⁴

In addition to the Regular commissions awarded to members of the first class, Reserve commissions were given to: Sara J. Anderson, Nedra C. Calender, Catherine L. Frazier, Pearl A. Jackson, Mildred D. Morrow, Mary E. O'Donnel, Emily C. Ogburn, Shirley A. Pritzer, Margaret C. Roberts, Barbara J. Stephenson, Phyllis L. Jones, and Marie L. Henry.⁶⁵ Among the 16 undergraduates who returned to school, but later served on active duty were Barbara B. Kasdorf, Joan P. O'Neil, Natalie Noble, and Mary Sue Mock.

The seven "Regulars" were assigned to the Basic School and began the Woman Officers' Indoctrination

Capt Elsie E. Hill, officer-in-charge, leads candidates of the first Woman Officer Candidate Class as they parade on Barnett Avenue, Quantico, Virginia, summer 1949.



Course on 23 September, but an administrative detail delayed their commissioning until the end of the month. During the intervening week, WOIC consisted of one Reserve first lieutenant and six Reserve sergeants—one of whom, Joan Morrissey, was underage and had to complete the entire course as an enlisted woman.⁶⁶

Captain Hill, assigned to the S-3 of the Basic School, and now the only woman staff officer left at Quantico, accompanied the students on a trip to Parris Island which was planned to acquaint the new officers

with recruit training and to give them the opportunity to drill enlisted troops. In the fall of 1949, there were no enlisted women—except Sergeant Morrissey—stationed at Quantico, and it was awkward, if not impossible, to conduct any type of close order drill with a formation of seven women.⁶⁷

Upon graduation, 18 November, the lieutenants were transferred and Captain Hill was reassigned to the Testing and Educational Unit, thereby becoming the first postwar woman Marine to be permanently stationed at Quantico.⁶⁸

CHAPTER 4

The Korean War Years

*Organized Reserve Gets Underway—Mission and Administration—The First Seven WR Platoons
Add Six More Platoons—Mobilization of Organized Reserve Units, Korea
Volunteer Reservists Answer The Call—Women Marines Return to Posts and Stations
Korean War Brings Changes to Recruit Training—A Few Changes at Officer Candidate School
The Korean Years, Reprise*

Organized Reserve Gets Underway

Of equal importance to the integration of women into the regular service was the development of a strong women's Reserve. During the early phases of planning, in 1946-47, Colonel Pate, Director, Division of Reserve, was a strong advocate of Organized Reserve units for women. He frequently found himself defending this relatively unpopular idea—an idea unique to the Marine Corps.¹ Senior Marines at Headquarters recognized the need for a women's Reserve, but Marines, by and large, shuddered at the thought of this female intrusion. Little by little, the concept gained wider acceptance especially when it was considered as an alternative to women Regulars. It effectively solved the problem of maintaining the affiliation of the WRs and of training a group who would eventually take their place.

Until February 1949, the Division of Reserve still thought in terms of 30 women's companies with a total strength of 60 officers and 1,500 enlisted women, but in reviewing the Marine Corps budget for fiscal year 1950, the Bureau of the Budget reduced the estimate and eliminated the provisions for drill pay for organized women's companies. The Division of Plans and Policies reexamined the location of existing organized units with the purpose of determining those in which women's detachments could readily be justified. Based upon the premise that any locality in which 500 or more enlisted personnel were administered would justify a women's Reserve detachment, the study recommended the activation of 30 women's platoons.² By March, the plans were finally approved for 15 platoons of two officers and 50 enlisted women each. Major Hamblet and Lieutenant Hale studied the case files of former WRs and made projected plans based on the size of existing male Reserve units, the geographic concentration of WR veterans, and upon available training facilities. In the end, they settled on the seven most promising locations in which to begin: Kansas City; Boston; Los Angeles; New York; Philadelphia; San Francisco; and Seattle.³

A mix of Regular and Reserve officers on continuous active duty would administer the program. Women

were needed to serve as Inspector-Instructor for each planned unit and for duty in the various Reserve District offices to give overall supervision to women's matters. Accordingly, a board was convened in March and the following selections were made for Inspector-Instructors: Captain Shirley J. Fuetsch, Los Angeles; Captain Helen A. Wilson, Philadelphia; First Lieutenant Frances M. Exum, Seattle; First Lieutenant Mary C. MacDonald, New York; and First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder, San Francisco. For duty in Reserve District offices, the following officers: Captain Constance Risegari-Gai, Boston; Captain Barbara Somers, New York; First Lieutenant Dolores L. Dubinsky, Philadelphia; First Lieutenant Lucille M. Olsen, Washington, D.C.; First Lieutenant Annie V. Bean, New Orleans; First Lieutenant Mary E. Roddy, Chicago; First Lieutenant Elva B. Chaffer, Los Angeles; First Lieutenant Beatrice R. Strong, San Francisco; First Lieutenant Mildred N. Cooke, Seattle; and First Lieutenant Mary W. Frazer, Atlanta.⁴

Mission and Administration

Reserve Memorandum 15-49 of 14 March 1949 published the specifics of administration and training of the women's portion of the Organized Reserve.⁵ The mission of these units was to provide individual women trained to meet mobilization needs of the Marine Corps. They were not classified by specialty as the male Reserve units were or as post-Korea women Reserve platoons would be. Designated women's Reserve platoons (WR platoons), they were attached directly to the major parent male unit as an organic element (e.g., WR Platoon, 11th Infantry Battalion) and not to any subunit. Inasmuch as the women were neither assigned to, nor trained for, combat duties, they were grouped into five subdivisions under Reserve Class VI in order to permit immediate distinction between men and women in case of mobilization.⁶

The male Inspector-Instructor staff was augmented by one woman officer, designated an assistant I&I, and one or two enlisted women who administered the WR platoon. The platoon was under the direct command of the commanding officer, a platoon leader, and a platoon officer. In many ways the platoon was

autonomous since the platoon leader was responsible for recruiting, administration, training, rank distribution, and the mobilization state of readiness of her platoon. Furthermore, she was directed to render administrative assistance to the male unit to compensate for the increased workload caused by the existence of the WR platoon. Very often, however, the women actually took over much of the parent unit's administration.

The WR platoons held weekly two-hour training periods during which their time was divided between formal classes, basic military indoctrination courses for the nonveterans, and specialist training classes in subjects like administration, disbursing, or training aids depending upon the background of the members, and giving clerical assistance to the male unit. It was expected that the basic course, closely resembling recruit training, and consisting of classes in drill, military customs and courtesies, history of the Marine Corps, naval law, interior guard duty, first aid, defense against chemical attack, uniform regulations, and current events would take about two years to complete.

Officers were procured only from among former WR officers and successful graduates of the WOTC at Quantico. Enlisted members were recruited from among WRs, women veterans of the Armed Forces, and nonveterans who met the qualifications. For veterans, the age limits specified that all previous active military service plus all inactive service in the Reserve must, when deducted from their actual age, equal 32 or less. Aspiring Reservists with no prior service had somewhat less stringent requirements than women being recruited for active duty: age, 18-31; and education, high school graduate, or high school student and pass the equivalency test. Regular recruits, on the other hand, had to be 20 years old and high school graduates.

To complete the organization, the Division of Reserve requested that WAVE pharmacist mates be included in the naval personnel allowance for those units which had a WR platoon. The decision was approved in the interest of public opinion, as well as health and accident security.⁷

The First Seven WR Platoons

The first WR platoon was activated on 14 April 1949 at Kansas City, Missouri. A Regular officer, First Lieutenant Ben Alice Day, was appointed Assistant I&I of the 5th 105mm Howitzer Battalion, USMCR, and Major Helen T. Chambers was assigned platoon lead-

er. In a very short time the platoon was up to its authorized strength.⁸

First Lieutenant Pauline "Polly" F. Riley, Irish and from Maine, was sent to Boston to activate the second WR platoon. Lieutenant Riley, formerly enlisted, was a member of the last WR officer candidate class in 1945. The class was made up entirely of enlisted WRs, and when World War II was declared over about a week before commissioning, the students were given three options: return to enlisted status, take a discharge if they had the required points, or accept the commission and remain on active duty for one year. Most of the candidates took the discharge or returned to enlisted status, but Lieutenant Riley was commissioned in August 1945 and served at Headquarters until 1947 on the Postwar Personnel Reorganization Board. She was released to inactive duty when the board was terminated and later was among the first 20 Regular women officers.⁹

With her New England background, it was logical to send Lieutenant Riley to Boston, where the WR Platoon, 2d Infantry Battalion, USMCR, was established on 22 April 1949 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Dugan and with Lieutenant Carolyn Tenteris as the platoon officer.¹⁰

Former WRs Staff Sergeant Frances A. Curwen, Staff Sergeant Katherine Keefe, Corporal Hazel A. Lindahl, and Corporal Dorothy M. Munroe were early members of the Boston unit. Among the nonveterans was Private Eleanor L. Judge, who originally enlisted in the Reserve because she happened to be free on Wednesday evenings, the women's scheduled drill night. But that was only the beginning; in 1977 with 27 years active service as a Regular, she reenlisted for three more years.¹¹

Sergeant Major Judge remembered that the women were "put through a pace." There were classes to attend as well as battalion administrative work to be done. The non-veterans were not issued regulation shoes and they drilled in their own civilian shoes which proved impractical and uncomfortable. The classes in naval law, taught by Sergeant Mary L. Attaya, a lawyer, were complete with mock trials in which the women played active roles, and there were Hollywood-made movies featuring the Marine Corps.¹² For all of this, a private was paid \$2.50 per drill and a captain received \$7.67.¹³

Captain Risegari-Gai, formerly the commanding officer of VTU 1-1(WR), Boston, was not a member since she had been selected for a continuous active



Capt Rosalie B. Johnson, assistant inspector-instructor of the 5th Infantry Battalion, Washington, D.C., discusses the formation of the local Organized Women's Reserve Platoon with Rachel Freeman, Charlotte De Garmo, and Sgt Theresa "Sue" M. Sousa.

duty billet in the office of the First Reserve District, which in those days was located in the Fargo Building in Boston. When Captain Risegari-Gai reported for duty, Colonel George O. Van Orden, District Director, and a Virginia gentleman, was quoted in the Boston newspaper as saying that his first sergeant needed a week off to recuperate because he was, "... the finest cussin gent yo'all ever did hear. Had to pretty up his language, though, with all these lady Marines around. He's a beaten man." The colonel, himself, had never seen a woman Marine until he arrived in Boston, saw Captain Risegari-Gai, and described himself as "thunderstruck."¹⁴

The next five platoons were organized by Reserve officers on continuous active duty, and it was necessary for them to go to Washington for a briefing before taking up their new duties. Captain Helen A.

Wilson was then sent to Philadelphia where recruiting was simplified when the entire VTU under the command of Captain Dorothy M. Knox transferred to the Organized Reserve. The unit became the WR platoon, 6th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, with Captain Knox as platoon leader and First Lieutenant Emily Horner as platoon officer.

From Philadelphia, Captain Wilson kept Colonel Towle informed of the platoon's progress and activities. By Christmas of 1949, recruiting was so successful that the unit was permitted to exceed its authorized strength by 10 percent. When the male commanding officers of other battalions heard of this, they were very much interested in receiving a similar authorization. The women in Philadelphia formed a rifle team, and a bowling team, and even fielded a team for a swim meet.

In response to one of Captain Wilson's informal reports, Colonel Towle, always conscious of the service woman's image, wrote:

I think you were wise to put a stop to post drill activities such as drinking in bars while in uniform. There is nothing intrinsically wrong, of course, but the very fact that a woman is in uniform makes her liable to criticism even though she is behaving herself in every respect. As you say, Women Marines have established a fine reputation and it would be most unfortunate to have any criticism leveled at them, especially when we ourselves can do much to prevent it. I think you have shown excellent judgement in your decision.¹⁵

First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder, who had served at the Department of the Pacific during World War II, was assigned as Assistant I&I, 12th Infantry Battalion, Treasure Island, and together with the Reserve officers Lieutenants Katherine W. Love and Marjorie J. Woolman, started San Francisco's WR platoon, whose roster included Sergeant Alameda Blessing; Corporal Rosita A. Martinez, who eventually integrated and retired as a master gunnery sergeant; and Corporal Ouida Craddock, who also went Regular, and later became the Sergeant Major of the Women Marines.¹⁶

Captain Shirley J. Fuetsch and First Lieutenant Frances M. Exum drove west together and parted at Denver—Fuetsch to go to the 13th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, in Los Angeles and Exum to go to the 11th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, at Seattle. In Los Angeles, two Reserve First Lieutenants, Esther N. Gaffney and Christine S. Strain, took the reins of the WR platoon while the Seattle unit was headed by Captain Nancy M. Roberts and First Lieutenant Fern D. Anderson.¹⁷

First Lieutenant Mary C. MacDonald, who before the war had been personal secretary to Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, was sent to New York to activate the WR platoon, 1st Infantry Battalion, USMCR, at Fort Schuyler. Captain Mildred Gannon and First Lieutenant Elizabeth Noble filled the two Reserve officer billets. Like Philadelphia, the Fort Schuyler platoon also increased its strength to 55, but eventually the authorization was rescinded, and the women had to "keep on their toes" to stay in. Those with poor attendance records were transferred involuntarily to the Inactive Reserve, and the platoon maintained a waiting list of potential recruits.¹⁸

Add Six More Platoons

After the original seven platoons were well established, plans were announced for an additional four. On 15 October 1949, WR platoons were activated as

elements of the 4th Infantry Battalion, Minneapolis; the 5th Infantry Battalion, Washington, D.C.; and the 9th Infantry Battalion at Chicago. On 1 November, the fourth WR Platoon was activated at St. Louis as part of the 3d Infantry Battalion.

Chicago's WRs were led by First Lieutenant Genevieve M. Dooner who had compiled quite a record as a volunteer recruiting officer in the postwar years. She was assisted by platoon officer Lieutenant Isabel F. Vosler and I&I Lieutenant Dorothy Holmberg.

First Lieutenant Elaine T. Carville, although of French background and from Louisiana, was ordered to Minneapolis because "she looked like a Swede." A Reserve officer on extended active duty, she activated the WR Platoon, 4th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, which came under the leadership of First Lieutenant Ardath Bierlein and Second Lieutenant Phyllis Davis. Well known for her enthusiasm and *esprit de corps*, Lieutenant Carville soon had a unit made up of 10 former WRs, 37 nonveterans, 2 ex-WAVES, and 1 ex-SPAR. Minneapolis-St. Paul had been chosen for a WR platoon from among a number of cities which had asked for one. The large number of wartime WRs from Minnesota plus the personal interest in the project displayed by Lieutenant Colonel Emmet O. Swanson, commanding officer of the 4th Battalion, combined to bring the unit to the "Twin Cities."

When plans for the platoon were first announced, 250 inquiries flooded the Reserve office at Wold-Chamberlain Naval Air Station. Lieutenant Carville personally interviewed 150 applicants. The first group of 45 selectees was sworn in on 2 November 1949 by Brigadier General Elmer H. Salzman in a ceremony at the airfield. Wartime WRs included Master Sergeant Cecilia Nadeau, Staff Sergeant Lucille Almon, Staff Sergeant Leona Dickey, Staff Sergeant Betty Guenther, Sergeant Gladys Pederson, Sergeant Anna Homza, Private First Class Betty Lemnke, Private First Class Grace Moak, Private First Class Ruth Mortenson, and Private First Class Kathleen Schoenecker. Among the nonveterans was Private Julia L. Bennke, who later went on to a full active duty career and retired in 1970 as a master sergeant.

Despite the commanding officer's enthusiasm for a WR platoon some members of his staff were concerned at the changes it would bring. Reportedly, Sergeant Major Thomas Polvogt said that on occasion he would issue rifles to the women Marines so they would know what they were dealing in when they handled

records for M-1s issued to guards, but he was not going to be responsible for powder puffs “or them other things they are going to issue.” Lieutenant Carville assured him that the women would be issued full Marine Corps uniforms “from the skin out” and Sergeant Major Polvogt would not have to worry about “them other things.”¹⁹

Captain Jeanette Pearson, Assistant I&I of the 5th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, Washington, D.C., activated that WR platoon with Major Mary L. Condon as platoon leader and First Lieutenant Ethel D. Fritts as platoon officer. Theresa “Sue” M. Sousa, later president of the Women Marines Association, was an early member of that very active unit which met at 230 C Street, N.W.²⁰

After the first WOTC, Captain Nita Bob Warner, selected for a three-year active duty contract, left Quantico for a Headquarters Marine Corps briefing before setting out for St. Louis to form the WR Platoon, 3d Infantry Battalion, USMCR. Officially activated on 1 November 1949, the unit received a great deal of publicity. On the night that enlistments opened, more than 100 applicants—one of whom was former WR Peggy Musselman, later assigned as the platoon leader—came to the Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Training Center at the foot of Ferry Street. According to retired Lieutenant Colonel Warner, this unit was supposed to be self-contained. That meant they were to recruit or train women to handle all matters of administration, supply, recruiting, disbursing, or whatever else it took to run an efficient organization.

Like the rest of the women Marine Reservists, those in St. Louis were shod in civilian shoes of various shades of brown and tan—an intolerable situation to Captain Warner. She enlisted the help of Staff Sergeant Mabel Otten, stationed at Headquarters Marine Corps, who sent a full case of cordovan brown shoe dye to the WR platoon. All 50 Reservists spent one drill period outside the armory “. . . wielding a bottle of cordovan brown shoe dye and shoe polish, dyeing their shoes dark brown and then learning how to give them a Marine Corps spit shine.” When St. Louis saw its first women Marines, a proud group, on 20 May 1950 in an Armed Forces Day parade, they were stepping out in regulation cordovan brown shoes.

As it turned out, the shoe color problem was more easily solved than that of providing the Reservists with summer uniforms. There were none! In the summer of 1950, Headquarters allowed the platoon two weeks



Inspector-Instructor 1stLt Doris V. Kleberger (standing second from right) attends an Open House for the Women Reserve Platoon, 17th Infantry Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, in Detroit, 1950.

of active duty for training at the armory, which they performed wearing the utility uniform—bib overalls and white T-shirts—which Lieutenant Colonel Warner laughingly recalls, “. . . made really quite a handsome outfit.”²¹

February 1950 saw the formation of the last two WR platoons. Second Lieutenant Doris Kleberger left Quantico to become the Assistant I&I, 17th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, Detroit, with Captain Cecelia Vanden Bossche as the platoon leader.²²

Captain Mary J. Hale went from Parris Island to Dallas where she served as Assistant I&I, 23d 155mm Howitzer Battalion, USMCR. She remembers that the Marines, Regular and Reserve, were very proud of the preparations they had made to welcome the WR platoon. On the night of the open house, planned to kick off the recruiting effort, Dallas was the scene of a “terrible ice storm,” but the Texans were undaunted and the unit was off to a good start. Captain Hazel C. Tyler was platoon leader and First Lieutenant Grace E. Kathan was platoon officer. Captain Hale, scrupulous in her explanation to recruits of a Reserve unit’s mobilization potential, was asked by the I&I if she really had to emphasize the point so strongly. Fortunately she continued to make an issue of it because within six months mobilization became a fact.²³

*Mobilization of Organized
Reserve Units—Korea*

Within 15 months of the initiation of women into the Organized Reserve, the value of the program was realized with the mobilization of all 13 WR platoons. Women, as a result of the Korean crisis, and for the first time in American history, were called involuntarily to military service along with men. Mobilization of Reserves, including women veterans, was announced in June 1950.

Since a number of women Reservists had belonged to organized platoons for only a few months, the term "veteran" was defined as women who had:

- a) served 90 days or more on active duty with the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserve; or
- b) attended 36 drills as members of an organized platoon; or
- c) attended 30 drills and 10 days active duty for training.

Those women who did not meet the criteria were classified as nonveterans, transferred to the Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve, Class III, and directed to await orders to recruit training at Parris Island.²⁴

Unfortunately, the 3d Recruit Training Battalion had closed down for the summer. Recruiting was something of a disappointment and thus far, no women

recruit platoon had reached its authorized strength of 50. That fact coupled with the manner in which WOTC was organized—as a temporary unit established anew each summer—led to the decision to terminate training at Parris Island and to assign the staff to Quantico temporarily to conduct officer training. Platoon 2A, graduating in May, was the last scheduled class until 18 September. Three officers and seven enlisted women from the permanent staff of 3d Recruit Training Battalion were temporarily reassigned to a subunit activated at Quantico on 2 June. The first group to leave Parris Island included Captain Jeanette I. Sustad, Second Lieutenants Joan Morrissey and Betty Preston, Technical Sergeant "A" Fern Schirmer, Staff Sergeant Bertha Schultz, and Sergeants Rosa V. Harrington and Ruth Ryan. Sergeants Grace M. Karl and Agnes C. Thomas and Private First Class Allis V. Wall soon followed.²⁵ They were barely established in Virginia when the news of mobilization broke and the urgent need for recruit training was realized, but it was too late to change plans as WOTC would be without a staff. So, when the WR platoons left for military duty, the nonveterans stayed behind expecting orders to Parris Island in early September.

The women Reserve officers were not mobilized in

Capt Cecelia Vanden Bossche, Commanding Officer, WR Platoon, 17th Infantry Battalion, Detroit, reads mobilization orders resulting from the Korean crisis in August 1950.





MSgt Petrina C. Nigro leads the platoon of the first post-World War II women Marines assigned to Headquarters, Department of the Pacific, San Francisco, California in 1950.

order to maintain a sufficient number of stateside billets to allow the rotation of male officers. Before the plan was published, several officers gave notice to their employers and prepared to leave for duty. The decision to exclude WM officers caused a morale problem at several levels of the women's Reserve program. According to retired Lieutenant Colonel Carville, Assistant I&I at Minneapolis at the time of mobilization, "It was a terrible, terrible, terrible mistake!" The I&I hated to tell Reserve officers, who, in turn were embarrassed in front of their troops. The enlisted women were at first apprehensive at the thought of leaving without their own, familiar officers. Later, some were even angrily asking, "Why us, and not them?"²⁶

The mobilization of the women caused by the conflict in Korea brought two significant changes to the women Marine program: it enabled women Marines to return to several duty stations, from which they had been absent during the postwar years, and it enabled them to break out of the strictly administrative mold into which they were cast after World War II. An analysis of tables of organization indicated that 1,183 women Marines could be assigned immediately,

releasing an equal number of men according to the following distribution:²⁷

Hq, Department of Pacific and	
Depot of Supplies, San Francisco	172
Marine Barracks and Marine Corps	
Supply Depot, Camp Pendleton	189
Marine Barracks and Marine Corps	
Supply Depot, Camp Lejeune	190
Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro	95
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island	133
Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point	195
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego	68
Marine Corps Schools, Quantico	141
Total	1,183

The WR platoons with 25 officers and 594 enlisted women were up to 88.6 percent of their authorized strength.²⁸ To make up the difference and to fill vacancies in critical specialties, an immediate call was made for veteran volunteers in the following occupational fields:

01 Personnel Administration
15 Printing and Reproduction
22 Fire Control Instrument Repair
25 Operational Communications
30 Supply Administration, Accounting and Stock Control
31 Supply Procurement, Warehousing, Shipping, and Receiving

- 34 Disbursing
- 35 Motor Transport
- 40 Machine Accounting
- 41 Post Exchange
- 43 Public Information
- 46 Photography
- 49 Training and Training Aids
- 52 Special Services
- 67 Air Control
- 70 Aviation Operations and Intelligence²⁹

Volunteer Reservists Answer The Call

An intensive short-term recruiting drive attracted former WRs like Corporal Anne Revak who volunteered at the start of the war, but could not be recalled from her home in Fairbanks, Alaska. She drove to Seattle in order to report within the continental United States, was accepted, and sent to Camp Pendleton.³⁰

Sergeant Ethyl Wilcox was recalled in August 1950 and ordered to recruiting duty, a billet she filled all through World War II. She was on the job, in civilian clothes, for several months before she had time to go to Chicago for a physical examination and uniforms. On duty in Minnesota, she spent her time processing Reservists and later recruiting women.³¹

Sergeant Mary S. Mock completed officer candidate training in 1949, and returned home to finish college. Too young to be commissioned, she accepted a teaching position but on 12 September, two days before school was scheduled to begin, she received a *collect* telegram ordering her to report to Quantico on 14 September. She attended Basic School, which was shortened from eight to four weeks because of the emergency, as an officer candidate, the only enlisted WM on the base. As such, she could not eat in the officers' mess with her classmates, and the commanding general thought it inappropriate for her to eat by herself in the general mess hall, so, in time, she was given an allowance to eat in civilian restaurants in the town of Quantico.³²

There were a number of women serving in district offices on continuous active duty contracts which stipulated that they could not be transferred against their wishes. One of these was First Lieutenant Mary E. Roddy, who had been the last WR to leave Cherry Point in 1946. When the transfer program was announced in 1948, she found that she did not meet the age criteria for integration, but that she was eligible for continuous active duty. She was selected and assigned to the 9th Reserve District Headquarters in the Federal Court Building on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. She was the woman Marine liaison officer and handled all WM matters, Reserve and Regular.

During this time, the Korean situation "was heating up" and the district director asked if she could find women Reservists to help with the administrative work. She successfully recruited some 15-20 former WRs for continuous active duty. At the time that they were recruited, Lieutenant Roddy explained that the contracts did not offer too much—a minimum of one year's duty and a clause that protected them from an involuntary transfer. But, she added that they had all left the Corps with good records, and if an emergency arose, she expected that they would fulfill the spirit of their contract as a Marine. Not long after, a mobilization roster, not entirely unexpected, arrived and the lieutenant called a meeting in the only available private spot, the ladies room. The women knew what was coming and although not legally obligated, they accepted the fate of mobilization "with good grace" and all, including Lieutenant Roddy, were soon sent to Washington, D.C.³³

At the time of mobilization, only 12 women were deferred or rejected which resulted in a mobilization of 98 percent of the women in the Organized Reserve.³⁴ Two hundred eighty-seven veterans were ordered to extended active duty and 298 nonveterans were ordered to Parris Island. All had been trained and assigned by January 1951. Together with the volunteer Reservists, a total of approximately 1,000 women were assigned to extended active duty. They worked in clerical fields, recruiting, public information, communications, photography, cartographic drafting, disbursing, and motor transport.³⁵

Women Marines Return to Posts and Stations

In June 1950 the only woman Marine company was Company E at Headquarters Battalion, Henderson Hall. The battalion at Parris Island was strictly a recruit command and no regular WMs worked outside of it. Women Marines were assigned to the Department of the Pacific at San Francisco, but they had no government quarters. All other WMs were working with the Reserve districts, Reserve platoons, or as recruiters.

The first priority then was to prepare billeting space at the posts and stations for the incoming women Marines. Major Pauline B. Beckley, Commanding Officer, Company E, was transferred to Parris Island to assume command of the recruit training battalion, with a temporary assignment en route. She, Technical Sergeant Schirmer, and Corporal Leona M. Fox reported to Camp Lejeune on 24 July 1950 to open and ready a barracks for occupancy by the women Reservists be-

ing ordered to active duty. The building had been vacated by men and, of course, did not pass the women's inspection. Lieutenant Colonel Beckley, looking back, wrote in 1977, "Don't think any three WMs worked harder—manually—than we did." With the exception of a battle with the G-4 for supplies, the women received fine cooperation from the Marines at Camp Lejeune, especially the commanding general, Major General Franklin A. Hart, and his staff.³⁶ Major Beckley was no stranger to Camp Lejeune, having served there as the postal officer of the schools and the executive officer of the WR battalion during World War II.

With Camp Lejeune prepared on the east coast, and San Francisco ready to process WMs on the west coast, it was at last possible to ship the Reserves. Many of the WR platoons left home on the same troop trains as the men. When the 5th Infantry Battalion of

Washington, D.C. entrained for Camp Lejeune, on 31 July 1950, the Marine Band gave them a sendoff befitting the country's first mobilized Marine Corps Reserve unit. Along with wives and children at Union Station to say goodbye were two husbands, W. G. Kegel and Edmund A. Gibson, there to bid farewell to Corporal Virginia S. Kegel and Technical Sergeant Josephine R. Gibson.³⁷

The WR platoon in Boston was mobilized on 7 August, one week before actual departure, and the women reported to the armory where they lived while performing the administrative tasks essential to the mobilization of an infantry battalion. When the day came to leave, 15 August 1950, marching to the music of the 2d Infantry Battalion band, 700 male Marines and 32 women Marines boarded the train for North Carolina. Billeting was carefully arranged so that the men occupied the forward cars, followed by the

In August 1950, Base Commander MajGen Oliver P. Smith greets (from left to right) TSgt Catherine G. Murray, Capt Jeanette I. Sustad, and Sgt Beatrice M. Kent, the first women Marines to be stationed at Camp Pendleton since the end of World War II.



dining car, then the male officers' car, and finally the women's car, guarded by MPs.³⁸

The first three Reserve platoons to arrive at Camp Lejeune were those from Washington, Philadelphia, and Boston. Three Regular staff NCOs, Staff Sergeants Esther Waclawski, Ruth Ryan, and Virginia L. Moore, students at Supply School, were already living in the barracks. In 1977, First Sergeant Waclawski could still hear the "click . . . click . . . click" of the high heels of the Reservists trooping off the buses and into the barracks. Customarily, women Marines wore oxfords for such formations and so the Regulars were undecided as to whether they should laugh at the Reservists in their more attractive shoes or envy them.³⁹

As soon as they arrived, and before they had time to settle, the women were processed and put to work to alleviate the personnel shortage caused by troop drafts for Korea. After the Camp Lejeune quota of 190 women was reached, Reservists were sent for duty to other east coast duty stations—Cherry Point, Parris Island, and Quantico. To avoid the establishment of additional administrative units, the women were attached to existing male units, and unlike World War II, they ate in existing male mess halls.⁴⁰

Those first few months were hectic. Many of the so-called "veterans" had never seen a Marine Corps base before. In addition to working long hours, an improvised boot camp was held evenings by the handful of experienced NCOs. Typically, a WM worked five days, had one-half day of military subjects training, and attended close order drill classes after evening chow, and according to Sergeant Major Judge, excuses from training were unheard of. The barracks routine, which included outside morning muster and chow formations (to make the formation and march up to the mess hall was mandatory; to enter and to eat was optional) was a culture shock to many of the women.⁴¹

The WM Company, Marine Barracks, Camp Lejeune, the first postwar women's company was formally activated on 13 October 1950, with Captain Mary J. Fisher commanding, and with Technical Sergeant Schirmer, first sergeant.⁴² The women were housed in Barracks 60 and 63 with the main area service club between. At the height of the Korean War, the WM company numbered approximately 400 women: 270 on duty with the base; 75 attached to the depot quartermaster; and 155 attending supply school and disbursing school.⁴³

At the same time that Camp Lejeune was being readied for the arrival of the WMs, women Reservists

from cities west of the Mississippi were reporting to San Francisco for processing and classification. Captain Sustad, Technical Sergeant Catherine G. Murray, and Sergeant Beatrice M. Kent reported to Camp Pendleton on 8 August to make advance preparations for the billeting of women Marines who would arrive as soon as the Department of the Pacific's and Depot of Supplies' quotas were filled.

The Pendleton WMs were assigned the same barracks in the "24" area occupied by their predecessors during World War II. Just before the Reservists arrived a fire destroyed all the mattresses, chests of drawers, and other supplies set aside to furnish their quarters.⁴⁴ A lesser crisis arose with the news that Headquarters required a guard from 1800 to 0600 posted around the WM barracks. To save personnel, the Marines at Camp Pendleton fenced in the WM area, and the gate was locked each night when liberty expired. In First Sergeant Waclawski's view, it looked like a prisoner-of-war compound, and she was pleased to see the fence come down after a visit by Colonel Hamblet in the mid-Fifties.⁴⁵

In addition to her regularly assigned duty as the custodian of registered publications, Captain Sustad was the "Supervisor of Women Marines," all of whom were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Barracks, Camp Pendleton. The WM company, under the command of Captain Sustad, was eventually activated as an element of Service Battalion on 1 June 1951.

One month after the WMs landed at Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego saw its first postwar woman Marine, First Lieutenant Kathryn E. Snyder, who had been on I&I duty in San Francisco until the WR platoon there was mobilized. In November, she was joined by Second Lieutenant Dorothy Dawson. Both women were assigned primary duties in the depot G-1 office, and additional duties, respectively, as WM platoon commander and platoon officer. The enlisted women arrived in December 1950 and were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion. Private First Class Dawn Zimmerman was first to report. By 8 December she had been joined by 15 others: Master Sergeant Cecilia Nadeau, Staff Sergeant Annette Burkhead, Sergeant Dorothy Walker, Privates First Class Inga Boberg, Margaret Cooper, Patricia Pfeiffer, and Frances Quinlan, and Privates Norma Adams, Jo Carrera, Phyllis Curtiss, Nita L. Fagan, Joy Hardy, and Rebecca

Rarrick. The balance of the WM platoons came directly from recruit training.⁴⁶

Major Emma Hope Clowers (nee Hendrickson) reported to San Diego in December of 1951 and in 1977 gave the following account of the activation of the WM company and of the problems encountered by the women officers assigned as supervisors rather than as commanding officers:

When I reported to MCRD in Dec 1951, the women were housed in two two-story barracks near the main gate and were carried on the rolls of HqCo, H&S Bn. Both barracks had open squadbays, with double-deck bunks for most of the women. (I believe the NCOs and SNCOs had single deck bunks, but that there were no separate areas set aside for them.) As I recall, even SNCOs were scattered at random through both barracks, alongside PFCs, in some cases. There was only one woman officer and myself, and there were no quarters on the base for either of us. Therefore, supervision of the women Marines after working hours and during weekends and holidays was almost entirely in the hands of the NCOs, even though I was on call much of the time at the home I had in Ocean Beach. It seemed as though a night rarely passed when I wasn't called at least once by the Post Duty Officer or by our Barracks NCO and I made many a trip to the base during the night. My position was strictly that of a barracks officer (such as WAVE officers at that time frequently held as additional duty). I had no authority over the women in administrative or disciplinary matters, or in fact any area, and the women were aware of that fact. At one time the women's CO was the Post Communications Officer, who had command of the company as additional duty. It was an impossible situation as I soon found out when I reassigned the women within the two barracks to break up the little cliques that had developed and to have the Staff NCOs in a separate area. I recall that some of the women staged what was probably one of the first of the "sit-ins" when I rearranged the barracks and reassigned them. It is amusing now but wasn't then. My "C.P." was a tiny converted stock room in the barracks with scarcely enough room for a desk. I was receiving urgent calls from Colonel Towle at HQMC about the formation of a women's company, but could never clear the hurdle set up by the base—a magic number which we had to meet before they would give us a company. Each time our strength was about to reach that number, we would have an unexpected discharge or transfer. But eventually we were given company status, and by the time I was transferred back to HQMC in May 53 I felt we had accomplished much in organization of the company, improvements in the barracks, reduction in disciplinary problems, and improvement in morale of the women.⁴⁷

The WM Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot was activated on 1 July 1952, Captain Clowers, commanding; Second Lieutenant Joyce M. Hamman, executive officer; and Master Sergeant Vera E. Piippo, first sergeant.

El Toro was originally programmed to receive 90

WMs, but later the commanding general actually identified 235 positions which could be filled by women. Plans were made at once to receive and quarter the women Marines—even before the usual advance group arrived. The large, eight-wing barracks behind the station administration building which had been occupied by the WRs during the war was vacated by the male Marines, then repainted and renovated.

Captain Warner left St. Louis shortly after her platoon was mobilized and during the first week of October became the first woman Marine to report to the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro since 1946. Until the company was activated, she was assigned as the station assistant personnel officer and administrative assistant for WMs.

Seven NCOs from Headquarters Marine Corps (Master Sergeant Bette A. Kohen; Staff Sergeants Margaret H. Crowell, Doris M. Plowman, and Martha J. Clark; Sergeants Chadeane A. Rhindress and Rita M. Walsh; and Corporal Maxine H. Carlson) who arrived in early November 1950 were the vanguard of the unit which would be known as the Woman Marine Detachment 1 (WMD 1). Waiting for more women to report in, the seven lived in the station hostess house.

Public Works had scrubbed and polished the barracks, and the NCOs settled in and made up the bunks for the incoming women, newly graduated recruits from Parris Island. Just one week before the barracks was to be occupied, a Santa Ana windstorm blew in from the desert and dumped an inch of red sand throughout all the squadbays in the women's building. Lieutenant Colonel Warner remembers that it was "an awful mess." There was sand everywhere and in everything—sheets, blankets, pillow cases. She and the NCOs literally shoveled out the barracks, got two wings ready, and closed off the others. A squared away living area awaited each new group of privates. Settled in, they, in turn cleaned a wing for the next contingent.

WMD 1 grew to a strength of approximately 250; almost all were recent graduates. The officers and the NCOs felt a great sense of responsibility and were like "mother hens" to the 18-year-old WMs—a new phenomenon in the Marine Corps. An NCO advisor was assigned to each squadbay and was always ready to listen and to help the young Marines make whatever adjustment was necessary. WMD 1 was a closely knit unit which Lieutenant Colonel Warner remembers as a "fine group of women."⁴⁸



The first post-World War II women Marines arrived at Quantico, Virginia, in 1951 and were assigned to the Administrative Section of the Landing Force Development Center.

Hard pressed for personnel, the Marines at El Toro made the women feel welcome and needed. The various squadron and station offices vied for WMs who were assigned to all except combat units. Interest ran so high that the *Flight Jacket*, the station newspaper, regularly published the number of women Marines expected along with their occupational specialty. On 20 October 1950 one article read:

Out of El Toro's first draft will be 11 basic personnel and administration women, seven basic communication girls and four basic supply people. There will be two basic shipping and receiving WRs, five basic post exchange stewards, two basic air controlwomen, and one basic flight equipment woman.⁴⁹

The return of the WMs made a similar impact on East Coast posts and stations. Matters of housing, uniforming, administration, and assignment had to be resolved quickly. At two of the bases, Quantico and Parris Island, training sites for WM officers and recruits, the adjustment was minimal.

The 3d Recruit Training Battalion underwent a minor organizational change on 20 November 1950, and WMs not involved in training but rather assigned to the depot offices were made members of Post

Troops Section under the section commander, Second Lieutenant Mary S. Mock. On 16 November 1951, the Post Personnel Company under the command of Captain Emily Schultz was officially activated as an element of the 3d Recruit Training Battalion.

The influx of women Marines to the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico was made less traumatic by virtue of the presence of a senior woman officer involved in officer training, a barracks already occupied by WMs, and a male unit, Headquarters Battalion, accustomed to having women on its rolls. Lieutenant Carville, having seen the Minneapolis WR platoon off to duty in San Francisco, was transferred to Quantico, where in addition to her assignment as administrative officer for the Marine Corps Landing Force Tactics and Techniques Board, she became the barracks officer for the permanently assigned WMs, the first of whom included Technical Sergeant Mary C. Quinn; Staff Sergeants Dorothea E. Hard, Mary K. Arcure, and Martha E. Kirchman; Sergeant Muriel V. Artz; Corporals Alma Noffke, R. F. Black, and Jane L. Reynolds; and Private M. L. Williamson.⁵⁰ In spite of the nontraditional command and administrative relationship where the women Marines were attached to one unit, worked in another, and were under the

supervision of a woman officer with no real authority, the first arrived WMs at Quantico were a cohesive group, and evidently, a well disciplined one. For a period of a year, there was not a single case of nonjudicial punishment involving a WM. Maintaining the record became a matter of great pride. But bad luck was their undoing when a private first class' auto broke down in the town of Triangle and after walking the three miles to the barracks in her high heels, she reported in from liberty 10 minutes late. On this and other occasions when a WM appeared before the battalion commander for office hours, it was Lieutenant Carville's habit to stand behind him and squeeze his shoulder when it appeared that he was weakening and unduly moved by a tearful story.⁵¹

For about 18 months, the WMs at Quantico were customarily attached to Headquarters or Service Battalion. A WM company was eventually formed under

the command of Captain Bernice M. Pittman on 1 May 1953 as an element of Service Battalion.

Captain Helen A. Wilson, on 7 September 1950, was the first of the WMs to return to the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina. She easily moved into the Navy nurses quarters, but housing the newly arrived enlisted women was more of a problem. When Staff Sergeant Katherine Keefe, a Boston Reservist, was transferred to Cherry Point after spending only a very short time at Camp Lejeune, she was temporarily quartered in the maternity ward of the naval hospital.⁵² The station WMs were attached to Headquarters Squadron until WMD 2 was officially activated on 1 March 1951 with Captain Wilson commanding, Second Lieutenant Natalie Noble, executive officer, and Master Sergeant Alice J. Connolly, sergeant major. In November 1951, ground was broken for the *Jet Hangar*, a new WM service club, and when it opened the

The Commanding Officer of Woman Marine Detachment 2, Cherry Point, North Carolina, Maj Helen A. Wilson (center), pictured in 1953 with (from left to right) MSgt Elizabeth Tarte, SSgt Muriel Artz, MSgt Alice Connolly, and MSgt Jessie Van Dyke.





Capt Helen Wilson, the senior woman officer at Cherry Point, and Col Katherine A. Towle, Director of Women Marines, check clothing display in 1952.

next spring, complete with juke box and patio, it was a popular spot for snacks, beer, soft drinks, and milk shakes.^{53*}

Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic (FMFLant), located at Norfolk, Virginia, asked for and received a total of 10 WMs; all were administrative clerks, and all were privates first class. It was Colonel Towle's policy to assign a woman officer to any base where enlisted women served and so Lieutenant Kleberger was assigned to Norfolk as the assistant force adjutant and additionally as the "Supervisor of Women Marines."⁵⁴

The original 10, Privates First Class Henrietta L.

*"Being the first Woman Marine on a major Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS - Cherry Point) in five years (1945 -1950) posed its problems. Upon my arrival, I was directed to report to the Commanding General. During this meeting, he pointed out that the five-year interim that had elapsed since women (other than Navy nurses) had been aboard made it evident that male Marines were unaccustomed to having female Marines as an integral part of their daily lives. Therefore, I was stunned when he said he'd hold me personally responsible if 'anything happened' to any of the women! He further suggested that no women should leave the base except in pairs (like Nuns, as I later expressed it). I wanted to remonstrate, but all I could say was 'Aye, Aye, Sir!'—knowing full well that I couldn't go on liberty with the women. They arrived shortly after my meeting with the General, in increments of 100 to 200. Nothing untoward happened. The men seemed happy to have them aboard, and I think they really were!" Col Helen A. Wilson comments on draft manuscript, dtd 1Jan80.

Belcher, Dorothy P. Eastman, Naomi M. Hallaway, Beatrice I. Harper, Theresa S. Kovar, Martha M. Ludwig, Margaret M. Martin, Mary A. Seman, Earlene Slaton, and Mary H. Clements were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFLant and quartered with the WAVES at the Norfolk Naval Base. Eventually on 1 April 1952, a WM Company was activated with Second Lieutenant Mary E. Sullivan commanding.

During the Korean War years, women Marines returned to Hawaii, in 1951 to FMFPac at Pearl Harbor and in 1953 to the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe Bay. On 31 July 1951 Lieutenant Colonel Hamblet became the first WM to be assigned to Headquarters, FMFPac. It was three months before Second Lieutenant Essie M. Lucas, graduate of the first WR recruit class in 1943 and the first officer candidate class in 1949, left San Francisco with 17 enlisted WMs on 5 October 1951. On board the military transport were Technical Sergeant Mary E. Roche; Sergeant Julia M. Pierce; Corporals Doris Allgood, Shirley Anderson, Lillian Brown, Olive G. Chapman, Anita F. Dale, Joyce R. Dupuy, Evangeline I. Lyon, Audrey E. Kleberger, Mary E. Scudder, Naomi J. Sexton, Ruth V. Tate, and Joan V. Walsh; and Privates First Class Nita M. Oliver, Vivia Smith, and Adoree R. Troche.⁵⁵

Upon arrival, the women were attached to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFPac, and were assigned a small, but very attractive two-storied wooden barracks overlooking the parade deck. Mrs. Victory, wife of Brigadier General Randall M. Victory, had supervised the decoration and when dignitaries visited the command, receptions were often held in the WM lounge.⁵⁶ Within six months the WMs had their own command, Company A, Headquarters and Service Battalion, FMFPac, under Second Lieutenant Margaret M. Schaffer. Unlike the male companies in the same battalion, the commanding officer of the woman Marine company was not empowered to sign record books or to issue company regulations. Only through the intervention of Colonel Towle several years later did the company commander gain the control usually associated with that position.⁵⁷ Early members of the command included: Master Sergeant Mary E. Roche, Technical Sergeants Mary E. Grande and Ann M. Kopp, Staff Sergeant Margaret E. Boerner, and Sergeants Barbara Jean Dulinsky (who later was to be the first WM to serve in Vietnam) and Emma G. Ramsey (who retired as a captain in May 1971).

In January 1956, Headquarters, FMFPac, moved from the Naval Base at Pearl Harbor to the old naval hospital at Aiea, which was designated Camp H. M. Smith. The women's company, commanded by Captain Kleberger, moved into former Navy nurses' quarters. The newly renovated barracks afforded suites for the senior SNCOs, private rooms for some, and rooms of two-to-four persons for sergeants and below. "The building abounded in lounges, exercise rooms, study rooms, and other fantastic facilities," recalled Lieutenant Colonel Kleberger.⁵⁸

WMD 3, a group of 56 WMs led by First Lieutenant Phyllis J. Young, stationed at Kaneohe Bay, on the opposite side of the island from Pearl Harbor, was the last woman Marine command to be activated in the 1950s. In an interview published in the *San Diego Chevron*, First Sergeant Doris P. Milholen recounted her trip to the island:

There were four of us from the detachment that were to leave by seaplane [the MARs] to arrive in Kaneohe ahead of the rest of the women Marines. But for about four days before takeoff the plane had engine trouble and the flight was delayed. The main detachment almost made it to the islands by ship before we finally got off the ground.⁵⁹

The women were quartered in one of the Marine Corps' newest and most modern barracks, sometimes referred to as "The Waldorf." The living areas were painted in pastel colors, and the amenities included a complete kitchen and adjoining dining room. The staff noncommissioned officers, living in single rooms, had private showers and their own lounge.⁶⁰

WMD 3 was a short-lived unit. It closed on 1 September 1956 due to personnel replacement problems, but was reactivated during the Vietnam War.

Korean War Brings Changes To Recruit Training

The year 1950 marked significant changes to the woman Marine program and consequently to the 3d Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island. Until May 1950, classes with a quota of 50 recruits each were convened consecutively. Beginning with the class of 18 September each class was composed of three platoons with a total strength of 150 women, and for the first time since World War II classes overlapped each other.

The Division of Plans and Policies indicated a need for 2,257 women Marines at posts and stations during fiscal year 1950 in addition to the 492 regular enlisted women on active duty. Based upon an estimate of 1,000 Reservists—organized and volunteer—on ex-

tended active duty, 1,257 women had to be provided for regular recruits. Added to this figure were the 300 nonveterans of the WR platoons who required basic training. The plans necessitated an increase in the table of organization of the recruit battalion and the assignment of another barracks, Building 901.⁶¹

Most of the staff members returned from Quantico where they had been assigned to WOTC and were supplemented by the I&Is of mobilized platoons. Captain Hale, away only six months, returned to Parris Island on 29 August as the interim commanding officer with First Lieutenant Dorothy A. Holmberg, the executive officer. Major Beckley, her work at Camp Lejeune completed, assumed command of the 3d Recruit Training Battalion on 18 September 1950 and Captain Hale became the executive officer.

With the increased need for Marines, the recruiting requirements were eased, allowing for the first time the enlistment of 18 year olds and also women who were not high school graduates but who could pass a high school equivalency examination. Colonel Towle was much opposed to the lowered educational standards, but was pressured by the other services and the Department of Defense. During this period the Veterans Administration, working on behalf of veterans desiring a college education, asked the colleges and universities to accept the equivalent examinations as evidence of successful completion of high school. The academic community was quick to point out the anomaly of asking an educational institution to recognize the examination when the military services did not.⁶²

It was a different woman recruit who reported to Parris Island in September 1950: many were younger and less skilled; others, with a smattering of Reserve experience, arrived wearing PFC stripes. In the class that convened on 18 September, 33 of the 144 were nonveterans from WR platoons.⁶³ Reluctantly, they moved the stripes from their uniforms. First Sergeant Schultz spoke of her duty as platoon sergeant and of her last recruit platoon—an honor platoon—which consisted mainly of Seattle Reservists. She said, "They must have had very good training. They were an outstanding platoon and my job was really alleviated as far as basic training was concerned."⁶⁴

A Few Changes at Officer Candidate School

The changes at the Woman Officer Candidates Course marked a significant shift in policy regarding



In the summer of 1951, Officer-in-Charge 1stLt Doris V. Kleberger (seated at far right) meets in barracks lounge with the first women Marines assigned to FMFLant, Norfolk.

the entire woman Marine program. Until the Korean situation arose, only a few women were offered commissions in the Regular service and allowed to remain on active duty. In contrast, the entire graduating class of 1951 was ordered to duty for 24 months.⁶⁵ Although this was intended as a temporary, emergency measure, it continued thereafter, changing only to lengthen the required service. The emphasis had changed from a strictly Reserve force on inactive duty to a nucleus of trained women Marines with at least a minimum of active duty experience.

The candidates who arrived in the summer of 1951 were uncertain of their status through much of the training, and those who were not college graduates feared that the Marine Corps would retain them on active duty as enlisted personnel rather than releasing them to finish their college education. Candidate Margaret A. Brewer, the last Director of Women Marines, and destined to be appointed the first woman general in 1978 was in this category, and she remembers the daily, changing rumors. The final result was that the women who accepted commissions were retained, those who refused commissions were dis-

charged, and undergraduates returned home in a Reserve status. Colonel Brewer recalled that with one semester remaining she returned to school, finished in January, and expected to attend the officer's basic class convening in the fall. Instead, she was ordered to active duty in May and assigned to El Toro as a communications watch officer, one of only a few woman Marine officers never to have attended the Basic School.⁶⁶

During the same period the Woman Officer Indoctrination Course underwent only a modest revision—shortening its training for the new lieutenants from eight to four weeks. For the graduates of the Woman Officer Candidate Course of 1952, however, the basic indoctrination class was lengthened to six weeks.

The Korean Years—Reprise

During the Korean years, the relatively few experienced women Marines were spread thinly and transferred often—Lieutenant Kleberger, for example, had four assignments, Quantico, Detroit, Norfolk, and Washington, D.C. in just two years. The officers and

NCOs worked together scrubbing and polishing barracks, setting up the new companies, training Reservists and Regulars, guiding young lieutenants and privates, and holding together a group consisting of a disproportionate number of inexperienced Marines. In March 1950, at the beginning of the Korean war, there were only 28 Regular officers and 496 Regular enlisted WMs and 18 Reserve officers and 41 Reserve

enlisted women on continuous active duty. Their common purpose and special pride in being a woman Marine served to override any personal differences which, if aired, would have undermined the group. They worked as one to bring the WMs back into the mainstream of the Marine Corps. Until one by one, the members of this pioneer group began to retire in 1963, they served as role models for the WMs who followed.



Congratulations are extended to 2dLt Nancy Flint (right) by Col Katherine A. Towle, Director of Women Marines (left), and LtCol Julia E. Hamblet, Commanding Officer, Women Officer Training Detachment, upon Lt Flint's graduation from the 4th Woman Officer Indoctrination Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, on 1 November 1952.

CHAPTER 5

Utilization and Numbers, 1951-1963

Utilization of Women Marines, Evolution of a Policy—Report of Procedures Analysis Office, 1951

Women Officers' MOSs, 1948-1953—1950-1953 Summary—1954-1964

Numbers—Utilization, 1954-1964—Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges, Officers

Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges, Staff Noncommissioned Officers

Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School—A Woman in the Fleet Marine Force

1954-1964 Summary

Utilization of Women Marines—Evolution of a Policy

The war in Korea marked the first of three turning points, each one opening new career fields to women Marines. The second turning point was the Woman Marine Program Study Group (Pepper Board) meeting in 1964. The third was the Ad-Hoc Committee on Increased Effectiveness in the Utilization of Women in the Marine Corps (Snell Committee) of 1973.

After World War II nearly all women Marines worked in the areas of administration and supply. WR veterans who had served in technical fields in World War II, especially in aviation specialties, were disappointed when they found themselves reclassified as typists and stenographers upon integration in 1948 and 1949. It is probable that many skilled WRs, trained during the war, when faced with the prospect of a change in occupational field, did not apply for Regular status.

Pre-Korea recruits, in spite of the detailed classification procedures followed at Parris Island, were invariably earmarked for administrative work. Ninety-five percent of them were assigned directly to a job; the remainder, however, were given formal training at the Personnel Administration School at Parris Island or the Yeoman Course at San Diego.¹ In the spring of 1950, just before the war, two recruits, Privates Nancy L. Bennett and Cynthia L. Thies, slated to be photographers, became the first WMs to complete boot camp and to be assigned to an occupational field other than administration. Both Marines had had experience in photography.²

The shortsightedness of these restrictive measures limiting the occupational opportunities and training of women to clerical duties was evident as soon as the North Koreans invaded South Korea in June 1950. Then, expediency dictated a more diverse classification of women. Manpower was in critically short supply. Each Marine Corps base was polled on the number of billets that could be filled by women, and on the billeting space available for distaff Marines. Unfortunately, the available women Marines had not been trained to fill many of the needs identified by this survey.

Report of Procedures Analysis Office, 1951

On 12 December 1950, four months after the mobilization, an internal memorandum in the Division of Plans and Policies on the subject of requirements for women Marines revealed that there were 76 military billets at Headquarters Marine Corps which by their nature could be filled by WMs but to which women were not assigned. Lack of training was cited as the cause. Furthermore, women were assigned to billets in accordance with ability, regardless of rank deficiency. At the time of the memorandum, 70 women privates first class were assigned to billets designated for higher ranks: 27 filling corporals billets; 32 filling sergeants billets; 9 in staff sergeant billets; 1 in a technical sergeant slot; and 1 in a master sergeant billet. It was noted, as well, that of a total of 438 military jobs at Headquarters, 230 were coded as requiring male Marines and of these "must be male" billets, 12 were filled by WMs. The recommendations made in view of the situation was that the table of organization be reviewed with an eye towards decreasing requirements for male Marines and that WMs, Regular and Reserve, with adequate work qualifications and rank be ordered to Headquarters. A like number of WMs from Headquarters, the least qualified clerically, would be transferred to posts and stations.³

Colonel Towle found the memorandum useful in pointing out what she saw as, "The difficulty of attempting to utilize untrained personnel in skilled military billets" and "the need of remedial measures."⁴ She reiterated her position that specialist training beyond recruit indoctrination was essential to meet the needs of both the Marine Corps and the individual Marine. Her conclusion was:

A policy which relies upon an ever-diminishing supply of World War II women reservists to continue to provide the skills presently needed by the Marine Corps as well as those which would be required in all-out mobilization, rather than establish systematic long range training beyond recruit indoctrination for younger women enlistees of the regular Marine Corps is considered unrealistic and shortsighted, as well as uneconomical.⁵

Subsequently, in May 1951, Plans and Policies Division asked that a study be made to determine the



Attending the Conference of Women Marine Commanding Officers and Women Representatives of Marine Corps Reserve and Recruitment Districts in June 1955, were (from left, seated): Maj Dorothy M. Knox; LtCol Pauline B. Beckley; Col Julia E. Hamblet; LtCol Elsie E. Hill; LtCol Barbara J. Bishop; and Maj Helen M. Tatum. Also (from left, standing): 1stLt Rita A. Ciotti; Capt Mary S. Mock; 1stLt Ruth J. O'Holleran; Capt Dolores A. Thorning; Maj Emily Horner; 1stLt Anne S. Ritter; Capt Valeria F. Hilgart; Capt Jeanne Fleming; Maj Nita B. Warner; Maj Shirley J. Fuetsch; 1stLt Nancy L. Doser; Capt Margaret E. Dougherty; Capt Elena D. Brigotti; and Capt Rosalie Crites.

military occupational specialties (MOS) in which women could be utilized and the proportion of the total number which could be profitably employed. The ensuing study conducted by the Procedures Analysis Office, evaluated MOSs on the basis of utilization of women in the past, legal restrictions, physical requirements, job environment, availability of training facilities, and the existence of promotional outlets. They noted that while women Marines were assigned MOSs in 25 different occupational fields, actually about 95 percent of the WMs were concentrated in only six fields. The lessons learned in the emergency brought on by the war in Korea were apparent in the conclusions drawn by the committee that:

- a. Women can be used in 27 of the 43 occupational fields.
- b. For maximum effectiveness, women should be employed (as a general rule) in a limited number of major activities.
- c. Under the present tables of organization, a maximum of

approximately 6,500 women can be employed.

d. Full utilization of women Marines requires an evaluation of the combined influence of all "restricted assignment" groups upon rotation policies.

e. Immediate steps should be taken to utilize women in all appropriate MOSs so that under full mobilization, expansion can be readily accomplished.

f. Service schools must be opened to women to train them for the appropriate MOS.

g. Billets that can be filled by women must be identified on tables of organization.

The 27 occupational fields considered appropriate were:

- 01 Personnel and Administration
- 02 Intelligence
- 04 Logistics
- 14 Mapping and Surveying
- 15 Printing
- 22 Fire Control Instrument Repair

- 25 Operational Communications
- 26 Communication Material
- 27 Electronics
- 30 Supply
- 31 Warehousing, Shipping, and Receiving
- 33 Food
- 34 Disbursing
- 35 Motor Transport
- 40 Machine Accounting
- 41 Post Exchange
- 43 Public Information
- 46 Photography
- 49 Training and Training Aids
- 52 Special Services
- 55 Band
- 66 Aviation Electronics
- 67 Air Control
- 68 Aerology
- 69 Aviation Synthetic Training Devices
- 70 Aviation Operations and Intelligence
- 71 Flight Equipment⁹

Colonel Towle endorsed the study calling it, "thorough, thoughtful, and essentially a realistic presentation of facts pertinent to the utilization of women within the Marine Corps." She did, however, take exception to the stated position that while women could perform the duties of the 27 recommended occupational fields, they could not be placed in all of the billets falling under each major heading since the "most effective utilization occurs when women supervise only women and when situations in which women supervise men or mixed groups are minimized."⁷ She submitted that:

... the most effective utilization of women does not necessarily depend upon women supervising women, unless credence is also given to the corollary of this statement that men should supervise only men. The situation at Headquarters Marine Corps is an excellent example of the invalidity of this contention. During World War II there were many instances at many posts and stations where women supervised both men and women with notable success. In this connection, it should be remembered that women officers' commissions are identical in wording to those of their male counterparts charging them not only with the duties and responsibilities of their grade and positions, but also assuring them of comparable military authority.^{8*}

*In fact, during the Korean War, women Marines made a few tentative steps toward taking over supervision of several all male groups. In 1952, Staff Sergeant Hazel A. Lindahl, a Reservist from Boston, held the top enlisted post at Camp Lejeune as Camp Sergeant Major of more than 40,000 Marines. During the same period, Master Sergeant Margaret A. Goings was the First Sergeant, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune. (DivWMs Scrapbook, box 4, *WMs HQMC Records*)

The final report of the Procedures Analysis Office was submitted in November 1951 and generated a letter the following January to all interested divisions and sections for comment. For the most part there was general agreement with the theory that wider utilization of women Marines would increase their potential effectiveness upon all-out mobilization. The Division of Aviation suggested a greater percentage of WMs could be properly assigned aviation specialties and recommended the addition of Occupational Field 64, Aircraft Maintenance and Repair, to the list of appropriate MOSs, but was overruled. The agency managing the 35 field, motor transport, commented that women were qualified to drive the cars, trucks, and jeeps, but the requirement that the driver load and unload the vehicle restricted their use. In the area of communications, it was recommended that a new field, administrative communications, be created and that women be used as switchboard operators. Women as instructors at the Communications-Electronic School was specifically ruled out due to their lack of combat experience and because they would have to supervise men.^{9*}

All comments and recommendations were incorporated and the list of appropriate MOSs for enlisted women Marines was promulgated in April 1952, about a year before the end of the Korean conflict.¹⁰

The same memorandum identified the following 16 occupational fields as unsuitable for women Marines.

- 03 Infantry
- 07 Antiaircraft Artillery
- 08 Field Artillery
- 11 Utilities
- 13 Construction and Equipment
- 18 Tank and Amphibian Tractor
- 21 Weapons Repair
- 23 Ammunition and Explosive Ordnance Disposal
- 32 Supply Services
- 36 Steward
- 56 Guided Missile
- 57 Chemical Warfare and Radiological Defense
- 58 Security and Guard
- 64 Aircraft Maintenance and Repair
- 65 Aviation Ordnance
- 73 Pilot

*In 1961, 10 years later, Lance Corporal Priscilla Carlson became the first woman Marine to instruct at Communications-Electronic School at San Diego. She was a graduate of 36 weeks training at the Basic Electronic Course, Radar Fundamentals Course, and Aviation Radar Repair Course, and she instructed the Radar Fundamentals Course. (*San Diego Chevron*, 28Jul61).

In spite of the above exclusions, during the Korean War at least a few women served in the utilities, weapons repair, supply services, and security guard field.¹¹ It is probable that they were Reservists already knowledgeable in these occupations.

At the time of the study, only six WMs were in the motor transport field. One of these, Sergeant Theresa "Sue" Sousa, mobilized with the Washington, D.C. Reserve platoon and on duty at Camp Pendleton, became a driver through determination, persistence, and because she proved she could handle a truck and jeep.¹² Then, in the fall of 1952, women were assigned to motor transport school for the intensive five-week course. The first WMs to receive such training since 1945 were Privates First Class Hazel E. Robbins, Christin Villanueva, Jessie Chance, Elizabeth Drew, and Ann Oberfell. By 1954, the number of women in motor transport jumped to 111.¹³ Colonel Valeria F. Hilgart, who was Commanding Officer, Company A, Pearl Harbor that year, remembered that she had 22 women Marine drivers and a woman Marine dispatcher, Sergeant Barbara Jean Dulinsky.¹⁴ This career field has been volatile for WMs as the number dwindled to seven in 1964 and rose to 186 in 1977.¹⁵

Now retired Gunnery Sergeant Helen A. Brusack and one other former WM worked in radio repairman assignments in 1950 but formal training in this field was not reopened to women until March 1953 when four WMs (Technical Sergeants Rosita A. Martinez and Katherine F. Tanalski and Sergeants Norine Anderson and Mary Williams) received orders to the 16-week course at the crystal grinding shop at the Baltimore Signal Depot in Fort Holabird, Baltimore. The highly technical course covered the manufacture of precisely cut crystals which controlled the frequency in radios.¹⁶ Like the motor transport field, this also proved to be a volatile field as the number of WMs assigned to it dropped to two in 1961 and then grew to 166 in 1977.¹⁷

Women Officers' MOSs, 1948-1953

After World War II, all officer MOSs were grouped into categories.¹⁸ For example, Category I included MOSs suitable for Regular unrestricted officers; Category II MOSs were suitable for Regular limited duty officers of company grade; and with the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, Category V MOSs were deemed suitable for Regular women officers. Only the following nine MOSs in four occupational fields, plus the designation for basic officers (unassigned second lieutenants) and one

ground colonel were considered to be appropriate for women:

0101 Basic Personnel and Administration Officer
0105 Administrative Officer
0110 Personnel Classification and Assignment Officer
0130 Adjutant
0190 Personnel Research Officer
3001 Basic Supply Administrative Officer
4001 Basic Machine Accounting Officer
4010 Machine Accounting Officer
4301 Basic Public Information Officer
9901 Basic Officer
9906 Colonel, Ground

For most of the fields, women officers were limited to the basic position and therefore not allowed to move up the ladder in that specialty as they were promoted. The war in Korea caused some of the restrictions to be lifted in 1950, but women officers continued to serve in a relatively minute number of fields.

This untenable situation was noted by the Classifications Section on 1 November 1952 when it was found that the large majority of the older, more experienced women officers were assigned MOS 0105 (Administrative Officer); few women held an additional MOS; and no woman at the time had two additional MOSs. In all, over 60 percent of all women officers in the Marine Corps were assigned a basic MOS or MOS 0105. The discovery led to a study involving a review of the cases of all women officers on active duty and letters to all sections interested in MOS assignments. In view of the antipathy displayed in 1947 and 1948 toward the use of women in the Marine Corps, the comments emanating from this study were gratifying to the women officers. The Assistant Chief of Staff G-1 wrote:

During the congressional discussion prior to the passage of the "Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948" it was emphasized that the primary reason for establishing women in Regular services was to provide a nucleus of trained women for rapid expansion in event of an emergency. If the Marine Corps assigns women officers only to the MOSs listed . . . there will not be a group of well trained, experienced women officers who could provide the necessary leadership in the many fields where large numbers of women will be utilized in the event of a national emergency.¹⁹

From the Classification Branch came the comment, "In fact in the final analysis it became apparent that a woman officer should be assigned any MOS for which she had become qualified by actual performance of duty in a satisfactory manner."²⁰ And following the list of recommended MOSs submitted by the Personnel Control Branch was the statement, "It is further

suggested that women officers not be precluded from assignment of other MOSs for which an individual may be qualified."²¹

In the second phase of the study each woman officer's qualifications were considered as well as the description of each MOS. Decisions were based on legal restrictions, physical restrictions, rotation constraints, technical schools open to women, billets held by WRs in World War II, and "American mores." As a result, the variety of MOSs assigned to women officers increased somewhat, mainly in the area of additional MOSs, that is, in secondary jobs for which they were considered qualified. On 1 March 1953, the allocation of primary MOSs to women officers was as follows:

01 Administration	87
02 Intelligence	1
25 Communications	7
30 Supply	25
31 Transportation	1
34 Disbursing	10

41 Post Exchange	4
43 Public Information	7
49 Training	2
52 Special Services	7
9906 Ground Colonel	1
Women Marine Officers on active duty ²²	152

The Division of Aviation had identified the seven fields of aircraft maintenance, aviation electronics, air control, aerology, aviation synthetic training devices, aviation operations and intelligence, and flight equipment as suitable for assignment to women Marine officers, but only three, aerology, training devices, and flight equipment appeared on the final approved list. As it turned out, women officers were not assigned to aviation specialties of any nature until about 1960.

Subsequent to the study, in March 1953, the Director, Division of Personnel, Brigadier General Reginald H. Ridgely, Jr., recommended that category restrictions on the assignment of MOSs to women officers be permanently removed and that a policy be established

Col Julia E. Hamblet (left), Director of Women Marines, and her assistant, 1stLt Doris V. Kleberger, confer with Maj Wesley C. Noren, monitor of woman officer assignments.



which would be consistent with the intent of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.²³

1950-1953 Summary

The Korean War brought permanent changes to the women Marine program, the most obvious being the return of WMs to major posts and stations. When the armistice was signed on 27 July 1953, women were serving at Headquarters Marine Corps; at the Marine Corps Air Stations at Cherry Point, El Toro, and Kaneohe; at the Recruit Depots at San Diego and Parris Island; at Marine Corps Bases at Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton, Quantico, Norfolk, and Pearl Harbor; at both the Depot of Supplies and the Department of the Pacific in San Francisco; at the various Reserve districts; and in Stuttgart, Germany.*

1954-1964

As the pressures of war subsided, so did the urgency to revitalize the women Marine program. The Personnel Department stated that "The Marine Corps' long range plan for the utilization of women Marines is to utilize them in sufficient numbers and appropriate military occupational specialties to provide a nucleus of trained women for rapid expansion in the event of full mobilization."²⁴ The wording was sufficiently vague to allow commanders to vacillate, to balk at the idea of women placed in key positions, and to deny formal schools to WMs.

Numbers

Numerically, women were limited by law to a ceiling of two percent of the authorized strength of the Corps, and the women officers were limited to 10 percent of the number of enlisted women. The Marine Corps set a goal of one percent rather than the allowable two, but never reached even that figure during the period 1954-1964. The one percent was not just an arbitrary, antiwoman measure but was arrived at in recognition of the Corps' mission and organization. Traditionally, the Marine Corps is a compact fighting

unit with much of its logistics and some of its supporting personnel furnished by the Navy. Women Marines were prohibited, by law, from "... duty in aircraft while such aircraft are engaged in combat missions and duty on vessels of the Navy except hospital ships and naval transports."²⁵ They were prohibited, by tradition, from Fleet Marine Force units, security forces at shore activities, and any unit whose mission it was to develop tactics or combat equipment.

To accomplish its mission, the Marine Corps is divided generally into 60 percent operating forces and 40 percent supporting units. Of the latter, during war-time and based on Korean War figures, eight percent could be patients, prisoners, and transients, leaving only 32 percent of the billets available to women. Even within the supporting establishment, certain factors restricted the utilization of women: legal prohibitions, Marine Corps rotation policy, and the necessity for in-service training for men in preparation for assignment to combat jobs or to the fleet. To further complicate the matter, women are only one in a list of restricted assignment groups which include sole-surviving sons, and twice-wounded Marines.²⁶ Added to the above constraints was the fact that all services planned a cut in women's strength in 1954. During the years between Korea and Vietnam the strength of the women Marines went from a peak of 2,787 in September 1953 to a low of 1,448 on 30 June 1964.

Utilization, 1954-1964

While women were assigned at various times to as many as 27 occupational fields, for the most part they remained concentrated in the same six or seven specialties, with 45-55 percent in personnel administration, followed by supply, communications (telephone operators), disbursing, data processing, post exchange, and public information. It took nearly 100 women officers to fill the strictly women's billets (WM companies, WM recruit and officer training, recruiting, officer selection duty, I&Is of WR platoons). Since the women officer strength averaged 125 for the years 1954-1964, the incidence of their assignment outside the woman Marine program was minimal.

Colonel Hamblet, Director of Women Marines 1953-1959, devoted much time on her annual inspection trips trying to convince the personnel people to assign senior women Marines to jobs other than those within the women's program. She found a reluctance to place women in positions where they had not served before, at least in the memory of the current base population. Most activities, on the other hand,

*In September 1952, for the first time, women Marines were assigned to duty in Europe. Arriving to serve on the staff of the Commander in Chief of U. S. Forces in Europe was Second Lieutenant Sara Frances McLamore, followed a week later by Captain Jeanette I. Sustad. Captain Sustad was assigned to message control and Second Lieutenant McLamore became the commanding officer of the joint detachment of enlisted women. They were soon joined by 11 enlisted women Marines. (Colonel Jeanette I. Sustad interview with Hist&MusDiv, HQMC, dtd 20Jun77 [Oral Hist Collection, Hist&MusDiv, HQMC]).

welcomed the presence of young, attractive women Marines in window dressing type jobs, as receptionists, for example, as long as they did not count against their allotted strength. Having succeeded in placing WMs in suitable billets, the director then met just as strong resistance in getting them released for a tour as a recruiter, drill instructor, or company commander.²⁷

A number of factors combined to bring on this ambivalence in the utilization of women Marines, only a portion of which could be attributed to sex discrimination. The average woman Marine was in the marriageable and child bearing age group and the forced separation brought on by prevailing regulations in this regard caused a proportionately high attrition rate for WMs compared to male Marines. A married woman could ask to be discharged after serving only one year of her enlistment.* There was, therefore, some instability and an unsatisfactory rate of personnel turnover that could not be stemmed without a drastic change in policy.

A second factor working to the detriment of the women was the insufficiency of their training coupled with the male Marines' expectation that women are naturally good typists, stenographers, and clerks. As late as 1955, only five percent of the WMs received formal training of any kind.²⁸ The majority of the enlisted women reported to their first duty assignment after a mere eight weeks of recruit training whereas the male private spent 12 weeks in boot camp followed by advanced training, and usually a tour in the Fleet Marine Force, thereby arriving at a post with some service behind him. The woman private suffered in comparison from both a military and a professional point of view, unless her supervisor understood the situation and took extra time not only to correct her work but to help her with the basics of military life like uniform regulations and saluting. Lieutenant Colonel Gail M. Reals, recalling her first job out of boot camp, relates that she reported to one office in the Education Center at Quantico in 1955 and was transferred to another almost immediately because she did not have a firm grasp of naval correspondence procedures, although she was an above average typist.**²⁹

*See Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion of marriage and motherhood regulations.

**In 1985, while serving as the chief of staff of the Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Colonel Reals became the first woman to be selected by a promotion board, in competition with her male Marine peers, to the rank of brigadier general.



LtCol Lily H. Gridley, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, first woman to serve as a legal assistance officer, is photographed at Marine Corps Headquarters in 1955.

There is a feeling among women veterans of the time, almost impossible to prove, that women had to perform better than men to be considered acceptable. Then, once a woman was found unsatisfactory, the office would not want another woman, no matter how many men had done poorly in the same billet.

Women officers were in an even less favorable position since their training after officer candidate school was limited to the six-week Woman Officer Indoctrination Course compared to the male lieutenants' nine-month Basic School. Furthermore, technical training was extremely rare and, for women, professional military schools were unheard of.

During these years, 1954-1964, very few new fields became available to women Marines. Generally, they were assigned to the same 27 occupational fields that were opened to them as a result of the Korean War. Most of the time, they served in no more than 21 of these at one given moment, and they maintained the usual 50 percent in administration, followed by supply, operational communications, and disbursing.

Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges — Officers

In this post-Korean era, senior women officers and senior staff noncommissioned officers faced similar problems, since by this time there was a sizable number of each and only a limited number of women's

program billets requiring so much rank. Women lieutenant colonels exchanged a few jobs as if on a circuit: Commanding Officer, Woman Recruit Training Battalion; Commanding Officer, Woman Marine Training Detachment; and an occasional assistant G-1 billet at a base that had been asked if it would accept a woman. It was the rule rather than the exception to serve in the same billet a second time. Typical of the pattern was the career of Lieutenant Colonel Elsie E. Hill, who commanded the officer candidate school 1949-1951 and again 1965-1966. She commanded the recruit battalion 1954-1956, exchanged positions with Lieutenant Colonel Barbara J. Bishop as Head, Women's Branch, Division of Reserve, Headquarters Marine Corps and in 1959 returned to the recruit battalion at Parris Island. In contrast to the Regular women officers, the two Reserve lieutenant colonels on active duty, Hazel E. Benn in educational services, and Lily H. Gridley, a lawyer, served a full 20 years in specialized jobs.

Perhaps the most remarkable senior woman officer assignment during this period was that of Lieutenant Colonel Emma H. Clowers as Head, Personal Affairs Branch, Personnel Department, Headquarters Marine Corps.³⁰ She was originally ordered in as the assistant branch head on 28 April 1959 but became branch head when a male colonel's orders to that department were rescinded. No record can be found of a woman Marine branch head on that level either before or for many years after her tour. She served in that capacity for seven years, during which she received strong and loyal support from the director of the Personnel

LtCol Emma H. Clowers discusses the assignment of women Marines with a fellow officer in the G-1 Division at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps in 1955.



Department and from the 15-20 male officers serving as heads of the various sections and as assistant branch head. Lieutenant Colonel Clowers found only one difficulty in her position which was directly related to her being a woman, and that was her lack of rank during some of the interbranch negotiations. The law at the time barred women officers, other than the director, from promotion to colonel, resulting in a woman officer (Clowers) performing duties for many years in a billet which before and after her assignment were performed by male colonels. Upon completion of that tour, Lieutenant Colonel Clowers was awarded her second Navy Commendation Medal, having received the first during World War II. The citation that accompanied her award noted that the duties were normally assigned to an officer of greater rank and that the hostilities in Vietnam demanded a rapid expansion of the branch. The scope of her responsibilities are underscored in that citation which read in part:

Extremely competent and resourceful, Colonel Clowers performed duties, which are normally assigned to an officer of greater rank, in a highly professional manner during a time when hostilities in Vietnam demanded rapid expansion of the Personal Affairs Branch to meet the added responsibilities. Through infinite foresight and judicious planning she accomplished organizational reforms which enhanced the effectiveness of the Personal Affairs Branch. In addition to establishing and maintaining excellent liaison and cooperation with agencies in both the military and civilian communities through which Marines and their dependents receive counselling, financial help, and other needed assistance, she substantially improved and expedited methods of informing concerned and anxious families of the condition of wounded or seriously ill Marines. She brought the needs of Marines and their families to the attention of those who draft and present proposed legislation to the Congress, thereby improving the scope and applicability of laws directed toward the necessities of military servicemen. With immeasurable personal concern and a keen sense of responsibility for the welfare and interests of Marines, she formulated a program for personal notification of the next of kin of casualties in Vietnam; developed and coordinated a system by which Marine Retired and Reserve General Officers visit evacuees in twenty-three naval hospitals; contributed materially to the formation of the Family Assistance Program, and directed expansion of job counselling facilities to assist retiring and retired personnel in finding suitable employment. Throughout her seven years in this capacity she skillfully directed her attention to the most minute details of each facet of her responsibilities in a manner which exemplifies more than could possibly be expected from any officer. Colonel Clowers' outstanding service, judgment and devotion to duty reflected great credit upon herself and the Marine Corps and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.³¹



A World War II mail clerk, TSgt Frances A. Curwen, the Marine Corps' only female postmaster in 1952, supervised the Montford Point Branch, Camp Lejeune Post Office.

*Rank Does Not Have Its Privileges —
Staff Noncommissioned Officers*

The staff noncommissioned officers were in a slightly different position in that they generally had a specialty and some training, whereas nearly all of the field grade officers at the time were classified as either women's unit officer or personnel administrator. Nevertheless, the staff noncommissioned officer found that 1) she was moved out of her field too often to serve in women's recruiting or training billets, and 2) as she became more senior, she was less welcome since she would be in the position to supervise male Marines. Then, once she proved herself, she was often considered indispensable. Inevitably, a controversy erupted when she was needed to fill a slot in the women's program, and more often than not, the Director of Women Marines was blamed by the woman for sending her on a third recruiting tour, and accused by the assignment branch of meddling in their business.

The staff noncommissioned officers of this period were, for the most part, former WRs who had served in responsible positions during World War II and had seen women perform all manner of duties to include supervision of male Marines. This only made them more incredulous at the narrow attitude taken by many male Marines. Master Sergeant Ruth Ryan, in 1960,

for example, was on orders to the Reserve district in Atlanta as the Logistics Chief until it was discovered that she was a woman. Eventually she went as planned, but only after being interviewed by her prospective officer in charge, an unusual procedure, and then not as the Logistics Chief, but as the Fiscal Chief, since that was deemed more appropriate.³²

Retired First Sergeant Frances A. Curwen Bilski represents a similar case. She had been a mail clerk from August 1943 until September 1946 at the fleet post office in San Francisco. Following the war, she was a member of the VTU and later the WR platoon in Boston. Mobilized for the Korean War, she served as postmaster at the Montford Point branch of the Camp Lejeune post office, and as an instructor at the Marine Corps East Coast Postal School in 1952. In the early 1960s, after having served as postmaster at Parris Island, she was ordered to similar duty in Hawaii, but the command absolutely refused to have a woman in the job, saying that the mail bags were too heavy for a female.³³

*Noncommissioned Officer
Leadership School*

With a memorandum to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, written by 12 May 1952, Colonel Towle initiated a stream of correspondence that culminated

with the creation of an NCO Leadership School for women Marines.³⁴ She cited the prevailing accelerated promotions of enlisted Marines with short periods of service and the loss of older, qualified NCOs as evidence of the need for such a course. Colonel Towle recommended that the school be located at Quantico in the same barracks used by officer candidates and basic second lieutenants from June through November.

The Commandant, Marine Corps Schools, and Commanding General, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, were both queried on the matter and in the meantime, the Director was asked to furnish guidance concerning the mission of the proposed school, subject matter to be covered, course length, and appropriate rank of the students. In answer, Colonel Towle recommended a four-week course whose mission would be "... to train an efficient and continuing staff of women noncommissioned officers for the duties and responsibilities commonly associated with 'troop' leadership,"³⁵ and to provide a source of potential officer candidates. She emphasized classes in leadership, personnel management, technique of in-

struction, use of training aids, Uniform Code of Military Justice, and military customs and courtesies for students ranking from staff sergeant through master sergeant.

Camp Lejeune was selected as the site and First Lieutenant Mary Jane Connell was named officer in charge. On 19 January 1953, for the first time since 1945 a Staff NCO Leadership School for women was convened. Major General Henry D. Linscott, the commanding general, gave the opening address to the 25 members of the new class.³⁶ Classes were held in a wing of Barracks 65 at the Navy Field Medical Research Laboratory five and a half days a week. In preparation, all the hand-selected instructors, Technical Sergeant Alice McIntyre, Technical Sergeant Frances A. Curwen (later Bilski), Master Sergeant Lillian V. Dolence, and Technical Sergeant Josephine R. Milburn attended a month-long session at the Navy Instructors School at Norfolk, Virginia.³⁷ Members of the first class included:

Master Sergeant Margaret A. Goings

Master Sergeant Alice M. Reny

Master Sergeant Margery R. Wilkie

Instructors of the Woman Marine Staff NCO Leadership School, Camp Lejeune, congratulate Officer-in-Charge Elaine T. Carville on her promotion to captain in July 1953.





Capt E. T. Carville, officer-in-charge, NCO Leadership School, is pictured (front row center) with Class 9 in 1953. MSgt P. C. Nigro (second row left) was the honor graduate.

Technical Sergeant Loraine G. Bruso
 Technical Sergeant Eleanor L. Childers
 Technical Sergeant Margaret L. Harwell
 Technical Sergeant Beatrice J. Jackson
 Technical Sergeant Dorothy L. Kearns
 Technical Sergeant Blossom J. McCall
 Technical Sergeant Sarah N. Thornton
 Technical Sergeant Laura H. Woolger
 Staff Sergeant May S. Belletto
 Staff Sergeant Phyllis J. Curtiss
 Staff Sergeant Anna M. Finnigan
 Staff Sergeant Nellie C. George
 Staff Sergeant Naomi Hutchinson
 Staff Sergeant Inez E. Smith
 Staff Sergeant Dorothy L. Vollmer
 Sergeant Carolyn J. Freeman
 Sergeant Sonya A. Green
 Sergeant Mary E. King
 Sergeant Dorothy L. Ley
 Sergeant Carol J. Homan
 Sergeant Margaret A. Shaffer³⁸

Colonel Towle gave the graduation speech and distributed the diplomas at ceremonies held on 13 February 1953, 10th anniversary of the Women Marines. The honor student for this first woman Marine NCO Leadership Class was Master Sergeant Reny, with Technical Sergeant Childers in second place, and Staff Sergeant Vollmer in third. Classes continued at Camp Lejeune for a little more than a year on a five-week cycle, four weeks of training and one week off. Staff

changes brought Captain Elaine T. Carville as the officer in charge with First Lieutenant Connell as her assistant and Technical Sergeants Lillian J. West and June V. Doberstein as instructors.³⁹

Colonel Hamblet, successor to Colonel Towle, reevaluated the situation and while convinced of the real need for the school, found the basis on which it was being run to be inefficient. Only 129 students rather than the authorized 225 had completed the training. The table of organization called for one officer, four enlisted instructors, and one clerk typist and the physical facilities used by the women included an office, a classroom, and a wing of a barracks. She proposed a move to Quantico since the staff required to train officer candidates from June through November could handle the NCO School during the winter months with only two additional enlisted women instructors. In turn, these enlisted women could be profitably used as platoon sergeants in the officer candidate program. There was at the time an unsuccessful (in terms of numbers) winter officer candidate class which would have to be cancelled, thereby making the barracks, classroom, and staff available.⁴⁰

The plan, promising a personnel and financial savings, was enthusiastically endorsed at Headquarters and by September 1954 the change were made. Technical Sergeants West and Doberstein was transferred

to Quantico where they worked with NCOs during the winter and officer candidates in the summer. Captain Carville was sent to Parris Island, and the remainder of the staff was dispersed.

The majority of women noncommissioned officers received leadership training during these years, 1954-1964, at the course conducted by the Women Marines Detachment, Quantico. Several commands assigned women to local, predominantly male, NCO schools. In fact, as early as 1951, Staff Sergeant Laura H. Woolger attended the 2d Wing NCO leadership school, graduating on 10 August of that year. A different tactic was tried at San Diego, California, where in 1959, the depot NCO school conducted two one-week accelerated courses for women Marines.

A Woman in the Fleet Marine Force

In this decade of status quo, it is surprising to find the first reported WM working in an FMF headquarters, admittedly in a traditional job. On 13 January 1954, Private First Class Betty Sue Murray was assigned as the secretary to the Commanding General, 2d Marine Division, Major General George F. Good, Jr.⁴¹ The general had called Captain Elaine T.

Carville, Commanding Officer, Woman Marine Company, Camp Lejeune, and told her that his office was in a mess, that he could not find anything, and that he wanted a woman Marine immediately. She explained that women Marines could not be assigned to an FMF unit, but the general only answered that he trusted her to work out the administrative details. Private First Class Murray was officially attached to the office of the Commanding Officer, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Base (Colonel John H. Cook), billeted in the WM barracks, and worked for Major General Good. She stayed at the job long enough to serve his successors, Major General Lewis B. Puller and Brigadier General Edward W. Snedeker.⁴² Not until 1975, 20 years in the future, would WMs be assigned legitimately to any FMF unit

1954-1964 Summary

The WM situation then, on 30 June 1964, was a strength of 129 officers and 1,320 enlisted women serving in 20 occupational fields. Women received little formal technical MOS training and were assigned to only one professional development course, the NCO Leadership School.

Utilization and Numbers: Pepper Board, 1964-1972

*The Pepper Board—Women Marine Program Revitalized, 1965-1973—Strength Increases
Women Officers Specialist Training, 1965-1973—Women Lawyers and Judges, A Beginning
Professional Training—Amphibious Warfare School—Post-Graduate Schooling
Command and Staff College—The Armed Forces Staff College
Advanced Training and Assignment of Enlisted Women Marines, 1965-1973
New Woman Marine Units, Stateside—Women Marines Overseas—Women Marines in Vietnam
Women Marines in Marine Security Guard Battalion—Women Marines Overseas, Summary*

Rapidly waning strength, unsatisfactory recruitment and retention results, and a need to improve the status and acceptance of women in the Marine Corps were the basis of Marine Corps Bulletin 5312, dated 27 February 1963, asking commands for recommendations on more efficient utilization of WMs. The results were collated and sent to the Director, Colonel Margaret M. Henderson, for comment. She categorized the recommendations into:

1. those which could not be implemented by the commands themselves.
2. those which were presumably already in effect.
3. those relating to more formal training for women Marines.
4. those which had possibilities, but required more study.
5. those in which she nonconcurred.

Taken as a whole, the recommendations made by the commands demonstrated a general lack of understanding of the status of women in the Marine Corps. It was readily apparent that the women were not thought of as personnel assets to be managed as all Marines. Statements that WMs should be assigned to billets appropriate to their grade and MOS, that women should be encouraged to participate in correspondence courses relating to their occupational specialty, and that the same performance standards be demanded of them as for male Marines, indicated a flaw in the system at the command level rather than in Headquarters policy since all of these matters came under local purview.¹

On one subject, the need for more formal training for women Marines, there was unanimity. Colonel Henderson strongly concurred, pointing out the fallacy of assigning WMs with eight weeks of recruit training directly to support establishment billets, and expecting the degree of knowledge and skill shown by male Marines who, after 11 weeks of recruit training, and four weeks of infantry training, had more than likely served 13 months in the Fleet Marine Force. She supported her stand with the statement:

Seventy percent of our Women Marine recruit graduates are between the ages of 18 and 20 and, in most instances, have come directly from high school into the Marine Corps with little or no work experience. These young women are bright, capable trainees, but we are actually expecting them

to be proficient in a specific MOS with only eight weeks of basic training. During calendar year 1963, 771 women Marines completed recruit training and only five were ordered directly from recruit training to a service school. In comparison, the women basic graduates from the Army, Navy and Air Force were ordered directly to service school as follows:

- (a) Army, approximately 90 percent
- (b) Navy, approximately 50 percent
- (c) Air Force, approximately 60 percent²

Colonel Henderson reasoned that specialty training in administration, supply, and communications would greatly improve the performance of WM recruit graduates since 77 percent of the 1963 graduates were concentrated in those three fields.

One week following the submission of her comments, Colonel Henderson completed her tour, and on 3 January 1964, she was relieved as Director of Women Marines by Colonel Barbara J. Bishop. Just three days earlier on the 1st of January, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., took the helm as the 23d Commandant of the Marine Corps, a timely occurrence for the women Marines. Writing about him later, Colonel Bishop said, "General Greene was light years ahead of his time in his support of increased opportunities for women Marines."³

Shortly after assuming command of the Corps, he directed Colonel Bishop to submit recommendations to effect improvement in the selection, training, and utilization of women Marines. Taking each identifiable problem in order: a strength decline to 1,333 WMs on 30 April 1964; conflicts over the assignments of noncommissioned officers and officers; unsatisfactory recruiting results for officers and enlisted women; inadequate training; inefficient utilization; low retention; and poor living conditions for enlisted women, Colonel Bishop expressed a number of highly controversial facts, observations, and recommendations.⁴

A discussion of the strength and general utilization of women Marines centered on the traditionally accepted goal of one percent of total enlisted strength, 1,750 enlisted women and 175 officers, which was considered workable based upon billeting conditions at the time. Women were assigned to all bases having mobilization requirements for WMs except the Ma-



LCpl A. Digman Atau, one of two women at El Toro in 1965 to give pilots training in the aviation trainer field, instructs Cpl J. Harris in the operation of an F8 link trainer.

rine Corps Supply Centers at Barstow and Albany, a factor which would cause a delay in time of emergency. Accordingly, Colonel Bishop recommended that woman Marine units be established at those two activities. And finally, in connection with general utilization of women, Colonel Bishop noted that in filling certain command, training, and recruiting billets there was a conflict between the authority of the Personnel Department and the Director of Women Marines, she asked that all changes of station orders for WM officers and enlisted women be routed to her office for information and concurrence.

Turning to officer training, policy at the time allowed officer candidates to disenroll at any time dur-

ing the training cycle, and many did so before giving themselves a chance to adjust to military life. The colonel recommended a change that would require all candidates to complete the course before making such a decision.

As for the career officer, she said:

There is a definite need to provide women majors and lieutenant colonels with professional education in command and staff duties. The value of advanced military education is recognized for male officers and the need is met by assignment to the Senior Course [later Command and Staff College]. Women officers of field grade would benefit equally from broadened knowledge of policies, programs and problems at all levels of the military establishment and of staff functioning at Headquarters Marine Corps, in the Department of Defense, and on joint staffs.⁵

To that end, Colonel Bishop reviewed the 1964-1965 syllabus for the Senior Course, held at Quantico, and determined that at least 432 hours of instruction would be extremely valuable for women. She specifically identified the following courses: Executive Leadership, Management Techniques and Procedures, Geopolitical and Current World Situation, Organization and Functioning for National Security, and Foreign Language.

In respect to senior WM officers' utilization, she discussed the hesitancy to assign them on the basis of their professional qualifications. She wrote:

When a woman major or lieutenant colonel becomes eligible for transfer and one of the billets requiring a woman is not available, there is a tendency prior to issuance of orders to query commands on their willingness to accept a woman. Acceptance is not based on ability since certainly the Personnel Monitors would not recommend the assignment of a woman to a billet inappropriate to her rank and professional qualifications.⁶

Then, as each Director of Women Marines before had done, Colonel Bishop pointed out the need for advanced specialist training for enlisted women. And, she ended her report with recommendations designed to improve the retention rate of WMs. These included a stricter policy on separations due to marriage balanced by increased efforts to station husbands and wives together, abolishment of the two-year enlistment contract in favor of a three- or four-year commitment, a guarantee similar to the one made to male enlistees of a change of station during the first enlistment, and improved living conditions. On the latter subject she was emphatic. It was not just that the women needed more privacy, she argued, but they spend more time in the barracks than men; the women staff NCOs who remain in the service are more likely to be single than male Marines who marry and live in their family homes; the majority of career women Marines would never share in the large expenditures made on married quarters and in the support of dependents' programs; and because the women took such good care of their barracks, inspecting officers were duly impressed by the cleanliness and attempts to create a homelike atmosphere. She recommended new construction of barracks adapted to the needs of women or at least the complete rehabilitation of existing structures, to be accomplished with the aid of a nationally known interior decorator.

That then is the essence of Director of Women Marines Study No. 1-64, a report that precipitated so much opposition that the Commandant ordered the

creation of a study group to "propose a program to render the peacetime service of women Marines of optimum benefit to the Marine Corps."⁷

The Pepper Board

On 3 August 1964, Lieutenant General Robert H. Pepper, USMC (Retired), was designated chairman of the Woman Marine Program Study Group, popularly known as the Pepper Board.⁸ The members included Colonel Bishop; Colonel Frank R. Porter, Jr., representative, G-1; Lieutenant Colonel Eugenous E. Hovatter, representative, Director of Personnel; Lieutenant Colonel Alfred I. Thomas, representative, G-3; Major Paul R. Fields, representative, G-4; Major Patricia A. Maas, representative, WM; Major Charles E. Baker, representative, Aviation; Major Paul P. Pirhalla, representative, Fiscal; and Major Jenny Wrenn, recorder. The Commandant's letter of instruction directed the study group to convene on 11 August 1964 and to submit its report by 1 October. Early on it was apparent that a detailed study could not be completed in the time allowed and verbal authority was given to extend the deadline as necessary. The final report was submitted on 30 November and routed to staff sections at Headquarters Marine Corps for comment.

Reaction was mixed and ranged from enthusiastic support for the 83 recommendations to bitter opposition. The Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Major General Richard G. Weede, for example, concurred with all but one recommendation under his purview. The one exception was the recommendation that selected field grade officers attend the Marine Corps Command and Staff College as full-time students. G-3 Division preferred courses in civilian universities for women officers or attendance at only a few selected subcourses of the Command and Staff College.

On the other hand, the Personnel Department, headed by Major General Lewis J. Fields, took issue with the thrust of the report and the philosophy that costly improvement would, in his words, "... attract more young ladies into the Marine Corps and induce them to stay longer and be more productive during their stay."⁹ He continued, "We should ... tailor our whole women's program to attract not young, untrained small-town high school graduates, but young women of professional skills and training who truly want to make their mark in a man's (which the military is unarguably) world."¹⁰ General Fields recommended recruitment of women already trained for a skilled trade, advanced rank, personal freedom com-

parable with Civil Service, and "a modified training program designed to teach about the Corps and not how to be a male Marine in skirts."¹¹ And lastly, since the Personnel Department reasoned that the greatest problem in WM housing in most places was caused by overcrowding, it was submitted that, "the best and quickest means of improving current housing would be to reduce the WM strength. . . ."¹²

In light of staff comments, some recommendations were changed or modified and on 13 April 1965 a Marine Corps Bulletin directed the staff agencies to take action on 75 of the recommendations already approved by the Commandant, and a reporting schedule was set up to keep General Greene informed of the progress being made. Although the program was considered long-range, not to be fully realized for two years, more than half of the proposals were at least a matter of policy by mid-1965. As a result, Lieutenant Colonel Jeanette I. Sustad was named to the new post of Deputy Director of Women Marines. In the past, the next senior woman officer at Headquarters filled that billet as an additional duty.

Women were to be assigned to and get training in a broader range of occupational fields, to include drafting, lithography, operational communications, communications maintenance, auditing, finance, accounting, informational services, aerology, air control, and flight equipment. The Basic Supply School and Teletype Operator School were made available almost immediately. The Pepper Board recommendation that senior officers attend Command and Staff College was unacceptable to most staff officers and post-graduate training in civilian or military schools was approved as a substitute.

An impressive list of new duty stations for WMs was published to include: Fleet Home Town News Center at Great Lakes; Marine Corps Reserve Data Services Center, Kansas City; Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California; Marine Air Reserve Training Center, Glenview, Illinois; the Supply Centers at Albany and Barstow; and Marine Corps Air Stations at Beaufort, New River, Kaneohe, Santa Ana, and Yuma. The absence of a WM Company or barracks no longer precluded the assignment of women Marines to any post or station as long as suitable offstation housing was available. Additionally, women would be afforded more overseas billets.

Changes in basic training included a greater use of male instructors; increased instruction in personal de-

velopment and grooming;* integration of some classes at the Woman Officer Basic Course and the Woman Officer Candidate Class; and a new requirement that candidates complete four weeks of training before being allowed to disenroll. At Parris Island, a two-platoon system or series system was created to inspire competition, and on-base liberty for recruits was to be in effect by January 1966.

Enlistment incentives that guaranteed preferred area, school, and occupational assignments to qualified enlisted women were planned. For the new officers who requested it, there was the promise of two duty stations during the initial three-year period of active duty.

To settle the difficulties of assignment arising from varying interests of the Director of Women Marines and the Personnel Department, a woman officer was assigned to the Classification and Assignment Branch at Headquarters as an occupational field monitor. Major Valeria F. Hilgart was the first to fill that position, arriving in Washington in November 1966.

An aggressive enforcement of the recommendations covering better living conditions for the women awaited the result of a Department of Defense study on the subject. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps reevaluated all WM barracks, SNCO quarters, and the furnishings. At Parris Island, lockers and dressers were installed in the recruit barracks to make their quarters less austere.** At Camp Pendleton, plans were made for a newly constructed WM barracks.

These are but a fraction of the changes in effect or on the drawing board in 1965. Some were implemented quickly; others came only with firm prodding from

*"Strangely (?) this became the most controversial change in WM training and was fiercely and almost entirely opposed by the senior WM officers and senior WM NCOs! I was determined to institute this program for a number of very valid (as they later proved) reasons:

(1) to give polish and new confidence to the individual woman.
(2) to improve WM recruiting by sending the girl back home where her improved and smart appearance invariably brought compliments and new recruits.

(3) to emphasize femininity as an asset to a woman's role in the military—to be coupled with proper assignment.

I enlisted and received the enthusiastic assistance of airlines which conducted aircraft hostess training schools (e.g. Pan Am) to which I assigned selected WM instructors for training and return to P.I. where we established a good grooming school. Beauty aids were provided free of charge by national cosmetic firms." (Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., comments on draft manuscript, dtd 26Dec79)

**A new clothing layout inspection requiring certain items to be displayed hanging in a locker hastened the addition of lockers to recruit barracks.



At the time the Marine Corps' only woman Marine lawyer on active duty, future military judge Capt Patricia A. Murphy, is promoted by Maj Jane Wallis, Commanding Officer, WM Company, and Lt Col Frederick D. Clements, at Camp Butler in 1967.

General Greene. In November of 1965 the Commandant was given a resume of actions completed on the Pepper Board recommendations which indicated considerable progress had been made. Not fully satisfied, he sent it to Colonel Bishop for her views. She began her remarks by noting the strength increase from 128 officers and 1,320 enlisted women on 30 June 1964 to 145 officers and 1,718 enlisted women on board on 31 October 1965 and the increased satisfaction expressed by commands with the performance and appearance of women Marines.¹³

She then commented in depth on the more disappointing progress shown in some areas. Of particular concern was the question of advanced training for senior officers. The original recommendation to send WM officers to Command and Staff College had been diluted to a statement about providing postgraduate training in civilian or military schools and the notation that WM officers were eligible to compete with male applicants for post-graduate training. No other action was considered necessary on this recommendation. Colonel Bishop wrote:

This has always been the case, with the result that one woman in 1950 managed to obtain a year in Personnel Administration at Ohio State. No gain has been made here as post-graduate training for senior women was to be a substitute for advanced professional training available to career Marines in AWS (Amphibious Warfare School) and Command and Staff College.¹⁴

After comparing Colonel Bishop's separate assessment of the progress made with that provided by the G-1, the Commandant pencilled in on the latter:

1. I want this type of report coordinated with the DIRWM prior to submission to CMC.

2. I have approved this particular report, but I am *definitely not satisfied* with action reported. See attached comments DIRWMs which deserve consideration and action.¹⁵

Women Marine Program Revitalized, 1965-1973

Three unrelated factors of disparate importance all joined to alter the future course of the woman Marine program at this point: a stricter policy on discharge based on marriage effective 15 July 1964; the Pepper Board report of 30 November 1964; and increased involvement of Marines in the war in Vietnam in 1965. Dramatic progress was made in strength, availability of formal training, opening of new occupational fields, and in assignment possibilities in the United States and overseas.

Strength Increases

The Pepper Board reaffirmed the policy stated in 1948 of maintaining a woman Marine strength of one percent of total Marine Corps enlisted strength. Actually the number of WMs had been steadily declining since 1953, leveling off at the one percent goal, approximately 1,700 from 1956 to 1959 and reaching a nadir of 1,281 in December 1964, when the Pepper Board reported its findings. In August 1965, due to Vietnam commitments, a 30,000-man increase was approved for the Marine Corps and higher objectives were concurrently set for WMs. By 31 May 1967, enlisted strength was 2,082 and officer strength reached 190. A peak of about 2,700 WMs was reached during the Vietnam era of 1968 and 1969 and then tapered to 2,288 on 30 June 1973.¹⁶

Higher recruiting goals accounted for some of the success, but more impact was made by better retention due to tighter control of discharges solely for reason of marriage. On 15 July 1964, a joint household policy became effective which denied discharge to women Marines who were located in the same area as their husbands. All discharges of this type were then suspended on 20 August 1965 in conjunction with a four-month involuntary extension for all Marines. By 1966 new regulations virtually eliminated marriage as a condition for discharge for WMs resulting in a reduction of that type of separation from 18.6 percent of woman Marine losses in 1964 to 2.3 percent in 1966 and finally 0 percent in 1969.¹⁷

Recruiting incentives guaranteeing geographic choices of duty and formal training combined with other enhancements resulting from the implementa-

tion of Pepper Board recommendations raised enlisted recruiting from about 60 percent attainment of quota in 1963 to 105.7 percent in 1966. Officer selection not only improved numerically, but a larger proportion of candidates were seniors or graduates than in previous years, a factor which cut down on the drop-out rate of younger students and ultimately led to an increase in commissions accepted. In 1966, officer selection attained 103.3 percent of senior-graduates quota and 152.5 percent of junior quota. Sophomores were no longer eligible.¹⁸ At the same time, the percent of women recruited as Regulars to serve a three- or four-year contract as opposed to Reserves with a two-year obligation rose from 48 percent in June to 77 percent on 31 March 1968.¹⁹

All told, efforts in the mid-1960s to stabilize the woman Marine program, to encourage women Marines to complete their initial enlistment, to lengthen the average tour of women Marines, and to make the Marine Corps an attractive choice for potential enlistees achieved demonstrable success.

*Women Officers' Specialist Training,
1965-1973*

In 1964, women officers were serving in only eight occupational fields with about 70 percent in administrative billets, and no deliberate attempt was made to achieve a wider distribution. Only 30.6 percent of the second lieutenants commissioned in the three-year period ending in 1964 had received formal specialist training. No training was available in personnel administration although the majority of women officers served in this field. In contrast, members of the 20th Woman Officers Basic Course which graduated in October 1966 were assigned in 14 occupational fields to include intelligence, operational communications, transportation, legal, avionics, aerology, and aviation operations, specialties in which women officers had been a rarity since World War II. Other fields to which the graduates were assigned were personnel and administration; supply administration and operations; auditing, finance, and accounting; data processing; Marine Corps exchange; information services; photography; training and training aids; and air control-antiair warfare. Seventy-two percent of these newly commissioned women officers received formal training at eight schools.²⁰ Earlier in the year, First Lieutenant Alice K. Kurashige, the first woman Marine officer since World War II to be assigned a primary MOS in food service, completed a 12-week course in food services supervision at Fort Lee, Virginia.



Capt. Carol A. Vertalino, first woman Marine officer to attend Amphibious Warfare School, is shown with LtGen. Carson A. Roberts, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at Quantico in 1963.

The following spring, 1967, Colonel Bishop reported in the *Woman Marine Newsletter* on the status of this officer training. The first WM officers to attend the Communication Officers Orientation Course at Quantico had made an impressive showing. In a class of three women and 23 men, Second Lieutenant Margaret B. Read finished second; Second Lieutenant Patricia A. Allegree fourth; and Second Lieutenant Lyn A. Liddle sixth. Second Lieutenant Janice C. Scott had completed the Military Intelligence Orientation Course at Fort Holabird, Maryland, in January and continued on to attend the 18-week Aerial Surveillance Officer Course. Second Lieutenant Tommy L. Treasure, also a graduate of Fort Holabird's Military Intelligence Officer Course, was ordered to a subsequent Aerial Surveillance Officers Course. CWO Elaine G. Freeman was to begin a four-week course in automatic data processing analysis in April and Captain Sara R. Beauchamp and Second Lieutenant JoAnn Deberry would follow in June. Four WM officers, Second Lieutenants Alpha R. Noguera, Donna J. Sherwood, Norma L. Tomlinson, and Harriet T. Wendel were scheduled to attend the 10-week Air Traffic Control Officers Course at the Naval Air Station, Glynco, Georgia.²¹

Women Lawyers and Judges—A Beginning

On 1 May 1944, Captain Lily S. Hutcheon, a lawyer stationed at Camp Lejeune, became the first woman judge advocate in the history of the Marine Corps. Captain Hutcheon had originally joined the Navy, but upon completion of Midshipman's School at Northampton, Massachusetts, was commissioned a first lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. She was released to inactive duty in 1946 but returned to continuous active duty in 1949. Under her married name, Gridley, she became a well-known Marine, highly respected for her work in legal assistance at

Headquarters Marine Corps where she served until her retirement in 1965. Lieutenant Colonel Gridley, for all those years, was the only woman Marine lawyer.²²

Then, as a direct result of the Pepper Board study, a woman was permitted to complete officer candidate training, accept a commission, and delay her active duty service while attending law school. In 1966-1967, First Lieutenant Patricia A. Murphy received her bachelor of laws degree from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., graduated from the Woman Officer Basic Course, passed the District of Columbia Bar examination, graduated from the Lawyer's Course at

SSgts Mary L. McLain (left) and Carmen Adams (right), the first enlisted women to arrive for duty at Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan, are greeted by Col William M. Lundin, commanding officer; SgtMaj J. F. Moore; and 1stSgt K. L. Ford in 1967.



Naval Justice School, was selected for promotion to captain, and was certified by the Judge Advocate General to perform as a trial or defense counsel of a general court martial.²³ Two years later, she became the first woman Marine officer ever to argue a case before the Court of Military Appeals, and in 1970 while stationed at Treasure Island, California, and by then Captain Patricia Murphy Gormley, she became the first woman Marine lawyer in 26 years to be certified as a military judge.²⁴

Professional Training

The Woman Marine Program Study Group (Pepper Board) identified the lack of career-type formal school training as the most notable deficiency in the woman Marine officer program. There was almost total opposition to the inclusion of women students at the Marine Corps' Command and Staff College since it would deprive a male Marine of the opportunity to attend this career-enhancing school. Less was said of the junior level course conducted for captains and majors at the Amphibious Warfare School and there was no opposition to sending women to Army or Navy schools provided these services would not ask for a reciprocal space in a Marine school for a WAC or WAVE officer.

Through unofficial conversation with the Director, Women's Army Corps, Colonel Bishop was able to lay the groundwork for women Marines to participate in the five-month WAC Career Officers Course at Fort McClellan, Alabama. Captain Barbara J. Lee, the first Marine to attend, graduated in May 1965.²⁵ She was followed by seven others. Captains Elaine E. Filkins (later Davies), Gail M. Reals, Jeanne Botwright (later Humphrey), and Joan M. Collins, who distinguished herself as an honor graduate by finishing second in the class, comprised an early group. The last three women to attend this school before it was disestablished in 1972 were Captains Karen G. Grant, Judybeth D. Barnett, and Ellen T. Laws.²⁶

Amphibious Warfare School

Given the climate of the period following the Pepper Board, the intense interest of Colonel Bishop in woman officer schooling, and the vigorous support of General Greene, it was but a matter of time before a woman officer was enrolled in the Marine Corps' Amphibious Warfare Course. Captain Carol A. Vertalino (later Diliberto) was assigned to a modified version of AWS 1-67, on a trial basis, beginning on 23 August 1966. Aware of the limits of her formal mili-

tary education, and knowing that the future assignment of WMs to the school was contingent upon her performance, Captain Vertalino spoke of her apprehension to Colonel Bishop. The director assured her that her selection was based on her professional reputation and her ability to get along with people. She was not expected to finish first in the class, indeed that might antagonize her fellow students. With five months to prepare herself, Captain Vertalino, on her own time, completed the Basic Officer and the AWS correspondence courses, each one designed to take the better part of a year.

The normal syllabus was altered to allow the lone woman student to visit base staff offices for briefings and informal training while the class was working on combat-related matters. It proved awkward for all concerned, the academic staff making suitable arrangements, the staff sections assigned to brief her, and, most of all, for Captain Vertalino. After her successful completion of the course in May 1967, it was decided that woman officers would attend subsequent, unmodified classes at AWS.²⁷

Post-Graduate Schooling

For the first time in more than 15 years, a woman officer was selected for postgraduate training in the Special Education Program.* In July 1967, First Lieutenant Judith Davenport reported to the Naval Post Graduate School at Monterey, California, to pursue a two-year course in applied mathematics.²⁸

Command and Staff College

The question of women officer students at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College remained unresolved for more than three years after the recommendation was made by the Pepper Board. Encouraged by the passage of Public Law 90-130 in 1967 which made women eligible for selection to the permanent grade of colonel, Colonel Bishop sent a memorandum to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, in which she stated:

... women officers will be expected to fill established billets appropriate for the grade of colonel in various Marine Corps commands. ... Women Marines who are now lieutenant colonels have had little or no formal professional education during their service careers. Efforts should be directed toward providing the younger group of these lieutenant colonels with career training which will enable them to serve beneficially in higher grades.²⁹

She asked that Lieutenant Colonel Jenny Wrenn be

*In 1950, Major Julia E. Hamblet attended Ohio State.

assigned, on a trial basis, to the class convening in August 1968. Lieutenant Colonel Wrenn had previously asked for such an assignment and the colonel for whom she worked, Chief, Plans and Operations Branch, Marine Corps Education Center, indicated to Colonel Bishop that he considered her to be, "an outstanding candidate should women officers be assigned to Command and Staff College."³⁰ Approval came on 9 February 1968 and included the words:

It is recognized that the restricted nature of assignments for Women Marine officers will preclude the full application of all instruction received from the college. However, participation in the full syllabus will provide valuable professional knowledge to enhance the growth of this selected Woman Marine officer and correspondingly increase her value to the U.S. Marine Corps.³¹

Women officers at the time reasoned that all Marine officers are limited to some degree by their classification as infantry officer, aviator, supply officer, etc., and none of them could expect to use fully all the instructional material. Since Lieutenant Colonel Wrenn successfully completed the Command and Staff College, women officers have been regularly included as class members.

The Armed Forces Staff College

The Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia, opened its doors to women officers in 1970. Provision was made for a quota of one woman officer of each service for the class which convened in February. Competition for selection between men and women was thereby eliminated and apparently there was no Marine Corps opposition to the plan to send a woman officer to this high-level school. Lieutenant Colonel Mary Evelyn Bane was selected to attend this course, graduated, and was then assigned to the G-1 Division at Headquarters Marine Corps.³²

Completion of such a prestigious military school did not dispel the notion that women colonels were not to be assigned in the normal fashion. When Lieutenant Colonel Bane was selected for promotion, the personnel monitor responsible for colonel assignments called her in and asked her where she thought she should be transferred since in her words, "The thought of disposing of a woman colonel was turning him pale."³³ Based upon her past experience, and her training, she offered the opinion that the most logical place might be Headquarters. He did not agree and said, "That would never do. You would have to be a branch head."³⁴ And so Colonel Bane was ordered to Camp

Pendleton where she filled an assistant chief of staff billet.*

Advanced Training and Assignment of Enlisted Women Marines, 1965-1973

Little time was lost between the Commandant's approval in mid-1965 and the implementation of the Pepper Board's recommendations regarding advanced training for enlisted women Marines. On 1 January 1966 a program emphasizing advanced technical training for women recruit graduates was published. Its purpose was to bring the woman Marine to an effective level of proficiency in her MOS as soon as possible. During the first six months of 1966, 75 percent of the women recruit graduates went on to advanced formal schools in 17 different fields, a sharp contrast to the five recruits who received post-recruit training in 1963.³⁵ In the Winter 1967 *Woman Marine Newsletter*, Colonel Bishop reported that women Marines attended a variety of military schools at Army, Navy, and Marine Corps bases and received basic-level instruction in such areas as administration, supply, telecommunications, electronics, disbursing, photography, aviation operations, aerology, air control, aviation training devices, optical instrument repair, transportation, cooking and baking, and journalism. Others attended advanced courses such as NCO leadership, administration chief, recruiting, air control, legal clerk and court reporter, supply, process photography, Marine security guard, instructor orientation, and data processing.³⁶

During the period 1965-1973, opportunities for women Marines were greatly expanded. The gains were evident but not to be taken for granted. Many long-held assignment prejudices persisted. Women Marines sent to the Naval Air Station, Memphis, for advanced training in aviation specialties, for example, were nearly all channeled into aviation supply and aviation operations, crowding these two specialties while others were far short of the planned WM quotas. Others, upon arrival at Memphis were reclassified into fields such as administration, which Colonel Bishop noted as "... unfortunate since they are denied advanced training and, having qualified for aviation school, they are among the better qualified WMs. . . ."³⁷ The Commandant reacted quickly with a letter to the com-

*In 1975 Colonel Bane returned to Headquarters as the Head of the Separation and Retirement Branch where she served until her retirement in 1977.

manding officer of the Marine Aviation Detachment at Memphis stating:

It is the Commandant's desire that Women Marines be assigned to a greater range of military occupational specialties to form a more efficient mobilization base. In consequence, it is requested that Women Marines assigned to your command for aviation training be assigned in the percentages indicated. . . .³⁸

A second example of strictly "sexist" assignments was the practice of using attractive, intelligent women Marines in jobs that were more show than substance. A number of WMs served in highly visible positions as receptionists in the Pentagon and it often happened that the most capable were retained there for inordinate periods of time. This worked to the disadvantage of the individual woman Marine who, when eventually transferred, found herself on a Marine Corps base as a staff noncommissioned officer without adequate experience to supervise, instruct, and counsel, let alone to drill a platoon or stand a duty watch. In the latter part of 1966, the Marine Corps was queried on the prospect of establishing a new billet in the office of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Colonel Bishop's comment was:

As desirable as these billets may be as "window dressing" for the Marine Corps, they have long been wasteful of the most capable and best appearing Women Marines. The work entailed in receptionists' billets offer no challenge to the caliber of women assigned to them. Each time a replacement is needed unreasonable selectivity requires a long parade of nominees to be submitted for the personal inspection of the office concerned. It is considered that the Marine Corps already had an undesirable monopoly on receptionist billets in the various Navy Secretary's Offices. It is recommended that the invitation to establish yet another billet be declined.³⁹

Overall, the plusses outweighed the minuses in the training and assignment of enlisted women in the years following the Pepper Board. In 1972, Colonel Sustad, as Director of Women Marines, reported to Congress that women could serve in 23 occupational fields; service in two of them, motor transport and band, was restricted to time of war. Women Marines were, in 1972, as a matter of law and of Marine Corps policy, prohibited from the following 12 fields: infantry; field artillery; utilities; construction equipment and shore party; tank and amphibian tractor; ammunition and explosive ordnance disposal; supply services; nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare; military police and corrections; electronics maintenance; aviation ordnance; and air delivery. Colonel Sustad went on to explain that:

Marine Corps policy on the utilization of women permits wide flexibility and interchangeability with male Marines. While 100 percent workability of this policy cannot be attained because of such factors as billeting, physical limitations, rotation base, or combat capability, it is recognized that basically a Woman Marine is qualified to serve in any location or in any billet if she possesses an appropriate and required skill.⁴⁰

At the time of her statement before Congress, enlisted women were actually assigned in 21 occupational fields with 34 percent in administration, 12 percent in supply, and 5 percent in operational communications, the three fields of greatest WM concentration.

New Woman Marine Units, Stateside

Coupled with new job opportunities came new geographic assignments. In Director of Women Marines Study 1-64, Colonel Bishop recommended the opening of woman Marine companies at bases with a mobilization requirement for women Marines, specifically, the Marine Corps Supply Centers at Barstow and Albany. The Pepper Board reaffirmed the idea and expanded it to include the Air Station at Kaneohe, Hawaii. Additionally, it recommended that women staff noncommissioned officers be assigned to Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms; Marine Corps Air Stations at Yuma and Beaufort; the Marine Corps Air Facilities at New River and Santa Ana; and, finally, it proposed that WM sergeants and above, be assigned to appropriate billets with the support and administrative sections of the various Marine barracks overseas.⁴¹

Marine Corps Supply Center, Barstow

On 13 January 1966, *Prospector*, the Barstow post newspaper, announced the arrival of the first woman Marine to report for duty at the Supply Center since 1946. Captain Veal J. Smith was named supply operations officer in Services Division. She became the expert in residence in the planning for a company of 100 women Marines due to be established when billeting arrangements were completed. The following month, First Lieutenant Wanda Raye Silvey assumed duties as disbursing officer in the Comptroller Division.⁴²

Gunnery Sergeants Virginia Almonte and Lea E. Woodworth arrived in June 1966, both assigned to the Center's Adjutant office.⁴³ First Lieutenant Rebecca M. Kraft, slated to be the first WM company commander at Barstow, joined them a year later on 25 June 1967.⁴⁴

And so, the first WM Company in the 25-year his-

tory of the Supply Center was activated on 1 July 1967. It was also the first new WM unit to be established in 13 years and brought to 11 the number of major Marine Corps commands with women's organizations. The first contingent of WMs, Lance Corporals Suzanne Bryant, Sheryl L. Moore, and Christina M. Christopher, arrived on 17 July and were greeted by First Lieutenant Kraft and the company first sergeant, Gunnery Sergeant Woodworth. Building 182 had been completely renovated and outfitted with new furniture.⁴⁵

The company at Barstow was short-lived, being deactivated in August 1971 and designated as a platoon of Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion. The senior WM on board was thereafter assigned additional duty as woman Marine advisor on the commanding general's special staff. From 1967 to 1971, seven officers served as WM company commanders at Barstow: First Lieutenant Rebecca M. Kraft, Captain Joan M. Hammond, First Lieutenant Diane L. Hamel, Captain Alice K. Kurashige, First Lieutenant Geraldine E. Peeler, Captain Vanda K. Brame,* and First Lieutenant Linda J. Lenhart.⁴⁶

Marine Corps Supply Center, Albany

Similar activity was taking place at Albany, Georgia. Private First Class Donna L. Albert, on 4 February 1966, was the first WM to report to that post for duty. Her assignment, making a departure from the custom of only stationing lower ranked women at locations with a WM unit was permitted because she was able to maintain a household with her husband, Private First Class Dennis M. Albert.⁴⁷

Second Lieutenant Emma G. Ramsey, formerly enlisted, arrived on 29 July 1966, the first WM officer to serve at the center. She was followed shortly thereafter by Master Sergeant Rita M. Walsh, making a total of three.

Second Lieutenant Ramsey, officer in charge of the manpower utilization unit, found herself undertaking the additional duty of commanding officer of the WM company then being formed. Working with Master Sergeant Walsh, she began the task of planning and preparing for a full-strength company. Barracks were remodeled, administrative support was arranged, and directives were drafted.⁴⁸

Apart from Second Lieutenant Ramsey and Master Sergeant Walsh, the initial company members arriv-

ing in August 1967 were: Master Sergeant Bernice P. Querry, the new first sergeant; Corporals Margaret G. Wegener and Barbara A. Zimmer; Lance Corporals Doris H. Pallant, Carrie M. Saxon, Marjorie W. Groht, Donna L. Correll, Cheryl L. Larison, Robin M. Holloway, Virginia Gonzales, Cathy L. Pierce, Barbara L. Bradek, and Rosemary Lamont; Privates First Class Kathleen A. Kisczik, Daryl R. Cessna, Linda A. Dewaele, and Gertrude Martin. Captain Sara R. Beauchamp arrived in September and was named the new commanding officer.⁴⁹

At the formal activation ceremonies on 13 September 1967, Sergeant Major of the Woman Marines Ouida W. Craddock unveiled a cornerstone plaque on the Woman Marine Barracks. Colonel Bishop and Captain Beauchamp assisted Albany's mayor, the Honorable James V. Davis, with the ribbon-cutting at Barracks 7103.⁵⁰ But, like the company at Barstow, the WM Company, Albany, enjoyed but a brief existence. It was deactivated on 1 November 1972 and the women became a platoon of Service Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion.⁵¹

Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe

The Pepper Board had recommended reactivation of a WM unit at the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Approval was initially deferred mainly because WM strength could not support establishment of this unit as well as new units at Barstow and Albany. Under the new policy permitting the assignment of women on an individual basis to commands where no WM unit or housing existed, two officers, Captain Manuela Hernandez and First Lieutenant Diane Leppaluoto were ordered to Kaneohe early in 1966. By the end of the year, the decision was made to activate a company of 100 enlisted women and two officers. Alterations began on a barracks and the company was formed in December 1967.⁵²

Women Marines Overseas

In July 1966 a decision was made to assign women Marines to the western Pacific area. The purpose was twofold: to free as many male Marines as possible for duty with committed Fleet Marine Force units and to provide WMs with additional career incentives. Plans were made to send women to Camp Butler on Okinawa; the Marine Corps Air Station at Iwakuni, Japan; and Headquarters, United States Military Assistance Command at Saigon, Vietnam. Each command was queried on the number of billets suitable for WMs and billeting space available.

*Captain Brame was one of four women Marines to receive the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for heroism. See Chapter 15 for details.



1stLt Anne Tallman (center), officer-in-charge of the first woman Marine contingent to arrive on Okinawa, stops to confer with members of her group upon arrival at Kadena Air Base in November 1966.

Women were asked to volunteer for the 13-month tour and had to be recommended by their commanding officers. Those with less than 13 months to serve were required to extend or reenlist to cover the tour length. Opportunities for enlisted women, private through gunnery sergeant, were greatest for those in administration, logistics, operational communications, telecommunications maintenance, supply, disbursing, data processing, informational services, photography, weather service, air traffic control, and aviation operations. Officers, warrant through major, were eligible for assignment to the Far East and were especially needed in administration, communications, supply, disbursing, and legal services. WMs were ordered to the Pacific area in increments to avoid a 100 percent turnover at the end of 13 months.⁵³

Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni

There was very little resistance to the idea of assigning WMs to Vietnam. The enthusiasm on Okinawa was somewhat less. There was outright opposition to the proposal at the Marine Corps Air Station at Iwakuni, Japan. The Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, had doubts about the plan based on the inadequacy of appropriate on-base recreational facilities and a lack of suitable off-base liberty areas. Colonel Bishop, when asked by the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., to comment on the subject, wrote:

Verbal and written objections expressed to date concerning the assignment of enlisted women to Iwakuni imply either that the prime consideration is the women's enjoyment of their tour or that their presence constitutes a serious threat to the good order and discipline of their masculine associates.⁵⁴

She advocated the weighing of adequate liberty facilities against the chance for the women to make meaningful contributions to Marine Corps personnel needs under conditions of minor personal hardship, and continued, "This response was not beyond their capabilities in the past."⁵⁵ Taking up the matter of the female presence, she added:

Presumably, the local command has been able to maintain sufficient disciplinary control over the masculine element to avoid undue unpleasantness for Navy Nurses, dependents of the other services, and civilian school teachers aboard the base.

The most telling argument against the assignment of women to Iwakuni is not their ability to adjust to unusual or difficult circumstances but the negative attitude expressed at all levels of command in WestPac toward their presence at Iwakuni. This attitude is hardly conducive to their welcome reception and normal uneventful adjustment.^{56*}

Colonel Bishop and the Sergeant Major of Women Marines, First Sergeant Evelyn E. Albert, made a trip to WestPac to confer with the commands and to inspect the available barracks. At Iwakuni all the briefings were designed to discourage the plan. In response to a question on the controversy, the former director wrote in a letter to the History and Museums Division in 1977:

Controversial is an understatement of the assignment of women to the Far East—particularly to Japan. Okinawa was no great problem—nor Vietnam, but the CO of the Air Station in Japan was unbelievable in his efforts to prevent this "catastrophe." (He made my trip interesting tho by having me dragged through an assortment of bars and what not as an indoctrination to the horrors of the Far East. I still have a fan presented to me by an aging proprietress of one of those establishments to show she bore no ill will to the women.)⁵⁷

*"Interestingly, the senior Navy nurse [when queried by General Greene during a visit to Iwakuni] adamantly opposed the assignment of women Marines to the station without being able to justify her opposition!

"This observation also applied to the CO of the Air Station! Based on an on-the-spot analysis it quickly became evident that WMs should be assigned to the station and I left determined to see this done, even if it became necessary to relieve the CO—a prospect which I communicated to him before my departure!" (Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr., comments on draft manuscript, dtd 26Dec79)

Captain Marilyn E. Wallace became the first woman Marine to serve in the Far East, reporting to the Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni on 15 October 1966. Assigned as station disbursing officer, she was billeted in a BOQ housing Navy nurses.⁵⁸ Five months later, on 23 March 1967, the arrival of the first enlisted women Marines raised the air station distaff strength to seven. The WMs, Gunnery Sergeant Frances J. Fisher, Staff Sergeants Carmen Adams and Mary L. McLain, and Sergeants Elva M. Pounders, Patricia Malnar, and Donna K. Duncan were accompanied on the last leg of their journey from Okinawa to Japan by Major Jane L. Wallis, senior WM in the Far East.⁵⁹

At Iwakuni, Colonel William M. Lundin, station commanding officer; Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Taylor, station executive officer; Sergeant Major J. F. Moore, station sergeant major; and First Sergeant K. L. Ford of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron were on hand to greet the women Marines and to take them to lunch. They were taken on a tour of the station ending with a welcome aboard gathering where they met the officers for whom they would work. Staff Sergeant Adams wrote to the Director of Woman Marines, "These Marines over here just can't seem to do enough for us."⁶⁰ The WMs received thorough briefings on customs, laws, and Japanese religions. Interviews were arranged with the Japanese press explaining the work of the women Marines to dispel any notions that they were taking jobs away from Japanese women.⁶¹

The welcome accorded the WMs at Iwakuni in 1967, in the wake of the bitter opposition voiced at the prospect of their assignment, was not unlike the reception given the first Regulars in 1948. Once the decision was final and the presence of women Marines was a *fait accompli*, Marines, with few exceptions, accepted the situation with good grace.

*Marine Corps Air Station,
Futema, Okinawa*

Within days of Captain Wallace's arrival at Iwakuni in October 1966, First Lieutenant Anne S. Tallman and nine enlisted WMs reported to Travis Air Force Base, California, for transportation to Okinawa.⁶² Arriving at Kadena Air Force Base not far from Futema on Saturday, 22 October, they were greeted by Major John D. Way, administrative officer; Captain George A. Kinser, personnel officer; and Sergeant Major John W. Arnby, the facility sergeant major. Included in the first group were Sergeant Carol A. Kindig; Corporals

Joan A. Carey, San Crosby, Patricia Hurlburt, Elizabeth Turner, and Ronelle Wuerch; and Lance Corporals Maryann Burger, Suzanne Davis, and Diana Savage. First Lieutenant Tallman took up the duties of informational officer and the enlisted women were assigned to operations, disbursing, supply, weather service, and communications.⁶³

The women Marines were attached to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. The senior WM officer functioned as the WM liaison to the commanding officer of the Marine Corps Air Facility. When more officers arrived, the senior woman officer became, as an additional duty, the officer in charge of the WMs. She reported to the commanding officer of the squadron and helped him with duty assignments, inspections, and matters related to the distaff Marines. The officers and staff noncommissioned officers (due to a lack of adequate space) lived in BOQ 217. The enlisted women lived in a small barracks, ideally situated behind the post exchange, and next to the swimming pool, theater, and gymnasium.⁶⁴

*Marine Corps Base,
Camp Butler, Okinawa*

The renovation of a barracks at Camp Smedley D.

BGen Ronald R. Van Stockum, assisted by Maj Jane L. Wallis, WM Company commander, Camp Butler, Okinawa cuts the birthday cake in November 1967.





Between 1967 and 1973, 36 women Marines served in South Vietnam. Capt Elaine E. Filkins (left) and Sgt Doris Denton (right) tour Saigon in a cyclo on a rare afternoon off.

Butler delayed the arrival of WMs for a few months. The first aboard were Major Jane L. Wallis and Second Lieutenant Doris M. Keeler, reporting in on 10 December 1966. Major Wallis, assistant base adjutant, was in addition officer in charge of the women Marines. Second Lieutenant Keeler, formerly enlisted, was assigned as communications officer.⁶⁵

On Monday, 16 January 1967, a contingent of 18 enlisted WMs arrived on Okinawa for assignment to Camp Butler and Futema. On hand to meet the arrivals were Brigadier General Ronald R. Van Stockum, Commanding General, FMFPac (Forward); Colonel Robert B. Laing, Sr., Futema Marine Corps Air Facility commander; Colonel James A. Gallo, Jr., Camp Butler executive officer; and Major Wallis, the senior woman Marine on the island. The 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade Band from Camp Hansen serenaded the women during the welcoming ceremony. The first enlisted women to be assigned at Camp Butler were Staff Sergeant Helen A. Dowd; Corporals

Kathleen Wright,* Sharon Lynn Bowe, Suzanne T. Guyman, Susan W. Blair, and Mary J. Andlott; and Lance Corporals Linda C. (nee Jaquet) Beck, Virginia Emaline Baker, and Brenda Ray Brown.⁶⁶

At work in the adjutant's office, Major Wallis saw much of the correspondence dealing with the opposition of the command toward the assignment of WMs to Okinawa. Yet, the welcome the women received was characteristically cordial. Major Wallis believes the Marines were sincere as they performed small acts of courtesy and consideration beyond the routine. As an example, at the time it was unofficially accepted that the men of each unit had their own table at the Staff Noncommissioned Officers Club, leaving the women SNCOs with literally no place to sit except the

*Sergeant Wright became the first Camp Butler woman Marine to receive a Certificate of Commendation for outstanding performance of duty. The certificate was presented by Major General John G. Bouker in February 1968.

bar. When Master Sergeant Sarah N. Thornton arrived, men from several of the units invited her to join their group whenever she came to the club. The WMs further found that once on the job, they soon became indispensable. Their work sections did not easily release women on Saturdays or Mondays, making weekend liberty trips difficult.⁶⁷ It was a bittersweet compliment.

Women Marines on Okinawa had a uniform problem since they wore the two-piece summer cord dress all year and it was often quite cold. The raincoat did not provide a satisfactory answer as it was too hot and sticky in the humid weather. Major Wallis and Second Lieutenant Keeler designed a green, V-necked cardigan sweater that fit under the lapels of the uniform. The small standard green buttons normally worn on the epaulets of the summer uniform were used on the non-regulation sweater. It cost about \$15 to have one custom made, and Colonel Bishop gave permission to wear it on Okinawa only.⁶⁸

WMs stationed at Camp Butler and Futema joined together to celebrate Christmas in Japan in 1967. Major Wallis and one enlisted woman flew to Camp Fuji to check the facilities. The question was, "Could 17 women live in one hootch (quonset hut) with only one shower?" They decided they certainly could manage for 72 hours. Marines moved out, doubled up, and turned over their hootch to the WMs. The medical dispensary was made into quarters for the women officers and staff noncommissioned officers. In all, 25 WMs spent the holidays at the Camp Fuji Range Company. Time was spent climbing the slopes of Mt. Fuji, skiing, and ice skating, but the highlight of the trip was a Christmas Eve party at the Seibi Yamanaka Orphanage. The Marines, men and women, arrived laden with pots of spaghetti and meatballs, orange soda, chocolate cake, and gaily wrapped presents for the 51 orphan boys. After the party the group returned to Camp Fuji to carol and to decorate the trees in the mess hall and the clubs. Late in the afternoon of Christmas Day, the Marines enjoyed a family-style traditional Christmas dinner.⁶⁹

February 1968 marked the 25th anniversary of the women Marines and Major Wallis' tour was extended to complete plans for a special celebration. It was planned to have WMs from all WestPac commands attend, and a search was made to find as many former WMs as possible from among the dependents. At the last moment, the WMs from Vietnam could not leave the country due to the Tet offensive of 1968.

Women Marines from Camp Butler, Futema, and Iwakuni gathered at Kadena's Airmen's Open Mess along with their guests. The traditional cake was cut by Major General John G. Bouker, who presented the first piece to Master Sergeant Thornton, oldest WM at the party, and the second to Lance Corporal Maureen McGauren, the youngest.⁷⁰

Women Marines in Vietnam

Companion to greater opportunity is greater responsibility and for women in the Marine Corps in the 1960s that meant service in the war-torn Republic of Vietnam. The announcement was made and plans were set in 1967 for one officer and nine enlisted women to fill desk billets with the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), based in Saigon. Generally, they were to work with the Marine Corps Personnel Section on the staff of the Commander, Naval Forces, Vietnam. The section provided administrative support to Marines assigned as far north as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Later, another officer billet was added and Lieutenant Colonels Ruth J. O'Holleran and Ruth F. Reinholz eventually served as historians with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, MACV.

Care was taken to select mature, stable WMs who could be expected to adapt to strange surroundings and cope in an emergency. Interested women Marines were asked to volunteer by notifying their commanding officer or by indicating their desire to serve in Vietnam on their fitness reports. There was no shortage of volunteers, but not all met the criteria. Then there was a number of women who would willingly accept, but not volunteer for orders to a combat zone. Theoretically, all WMs who served in Vietnam were volunteers in that nearly all had expressed their willingness to go and none objected.⁷¹ When Master Sergeant Bridget V. Connolly was asked what made her volunteer for duty in Saigon, she laughed and said, "Who volunteered? I received my orders in the guard mail." She became a legitimate volunteer when her initial tour ended and she extended for an additional six months.⁷²

The first woman Marine to report to Vietnam for duty was Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky, who arrived on 18 March 1967. After an 18-hour flight, she landed at dusk at Bien Hoa, about 30 miles north of Saigon. Travel was restricted after dark on the unsecure roads, so she was billeted overnight at the airfield. The next morning she was taken by bus and armed escort to Koeppler Compound in Saigon and

there her tour began with a security lecture. The briefing was not concerned with security of classified material as one might expect, but with security in day-to-day living in Vietnam, such as recognizing booby traps, and checking cabs upon entering to ensure there was a handle inside. Arrival procedures were similar for most WMs.⁷³

At first, the enlisted women were quartered in the Ambassador Hotel, and later they moved to the Plaza, a hotel-dormitory, two to a room. Women of other services and several hundred men called the Plaza home. By spring 1968, the enlisted women were moved to the Billings Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQ), located near MACV Headquarters and Tan Son Nhut Airbase.

Generally, the women officers were billeted in Le Qui Don, a hotel-like Bachelor Officers Quarters (BOQ). Company grade officers were usually assigned two to a room; WMs and WAVES billeted together.

Like the Plaza and Billings BEQ, Le Qui Don Hotel was air conditioned, but electricity was a sometime thing.

There were no eating facilities in either the Billings BEQ or the Le Qui Don BOQ. Most of the women cooked in their room on hot plates or with electric skillets. When the power was out, they managed with charcoal-grilled meals served by candlelight.⁷⁴

There were no laundry facilities, but for about \$15 a month, each woman hired a maid who cleaned her room, and washed and pressed her uniforms. Before leaving the United States the women Marines were cautioned to bring an ample supply of nylons, sturdy cotton lingerie, and summer uniforms. Not only were these items scarce in the post exchange that catered to male troops, but the maids were unduly hard on them. Lieutenant Colonel Elaine E. Filkins (later Davies) spoke of looking out her window to see the maid laundering her nylon stockings and lingerie in a creek

SSgt Ermelinda Salazar, nominated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award, recognizing her assistance to children of the St. Vincent De Paul Orphanage, Saigon, is the subject of this painting by artist Cliff Young.



by pounding them with rocks. The garments that survived were a mass of torn, short elastic threads. Girdles and bras were short-lived "in the combat zone."⁷⁵

Nylon hosiery was a luxury. Women of some services were even excused from wearing them when in uniform, a privilege not extended to women Marines. Vietnamese women were fascinated by the sheer stockings and Lieutenant Colonel Vera M. Jones told of walking down the streets of Saigon and being startled by the touch of a Vietnamese woman feeling her stockings.⁷⁶

The women were advised to arrive with four to six pairs of dress pumps for uniform wear because the streets were hard on shoes and repair service was unsatisfactory. In the "Information on Saigon" booklet provided each woman before leaving the United States was written, ". . . bring a dozen sets of heel lifts. . . . Heels can easily be extracted with a pair of pliers and new ones inserted with little difficulty."⁷⁷

For the most part the WMs worked in Saigon, but on occasion duty took them outside the city. In January 1969, Captain Filkins, in a letter to the Director of Women Marines, wrote:

In early December, Corporal Spaatz and I traveled to Da Nang with nearly 100 SRB/OQRs [service record books/officer qualification records] to conduct an audit of the service records of the men stationed in the north. The Army I Corps had been most kind in aiding us in our efforts to provide administrative assistance to our widely scattered men. Corporal Spaatz is a fine representative for the WMs with her professional handling of the audit. It was obvious that the men enjoyed the unfamiliar click of the female high heeled shoes. The weather was on our side so we were able to wear the dress with pumps the entire visit.⁷⁸

When the weather was unusually wet or when the city was under attack, the women wore utilities and oxfords. In addition the Army issued field uniforms and combat boots to any woman required to wear them for duty.

The Tet offensive of January-February 1968, a large-scale enemy attack that disrupted the city, brought some changes to the lives of WMs in Saigon. At the time enlisted women were still quartered at the Plaza which received automatic weapons fire. Bus service to many of the BOQs and BEQs was cut off, confining the women to their quarters.

Captain Jones was unable to leave the Le Qui Don for a day and a half before bus service, with armed escorts, resumed. Excerpts of a letter from Captain Jones to Colonel Bishop told something of the situation:

3 February 1968. It's hard to believe that a war is going on around me. I sit here calmly typing this letter and yet can get up, walk to a window, and watch the helicopters making machine gun and rocket strikes in the area of the golf course which is about three blocks away. At night, I lie in bed and listen to the mortar rounds going off. The streets, which are normally crowded with traffic, are virtually bare MSgt Dulinsky, Cpl Hensley, and Cpl Wilson finally got into work this afternoon. Cpls Hensley and Wilson plan to spend the night.⁷⁹

Excerpts from a letter from Master Sergeant Dulinsky elaborated:

9 February 1968. We are still on a 24-hour curfew, with all hands in utilities MACV personnel (women included) were bussed down to Koeppler compound and issued 3 pair of jungle fatigues and a pair of jungle boots.

Right now, most of us don't look the picture of "The New Image." Whew! Hardly! I can't determine at night, if I'm pooped from the work day or from carrying around these anvils tied to my feet called combat boots.

Our Young-uns (and me too inside) were scared; but you'd have been proud of them. They turned to in the mess, cashiering, washing dishes, serving and clearing tables.⁸⁰

Although the Tet offensive kept the women from attending the celebration of the silver anniversary of the women Marines in Okinawa, they were not without a celebration. Thanks to a WAVE and male Marines, they had a cake in the office and the traditional cake-cutting ceremony.

The command expected each person to work 60 productive hours a week. Time off was precious, and recreational facilities were limited. Bowling was a popular sport, and old American television shows were broadcast a few hours each evening. The city was often under curfew with the Americans back in their quarters by 2000 or 2200. Movies were available several nights a week in some of the BEQs and BOQs. A number of the women kept busy during their off-duty hours by working at the Armed Forces Television Station, helping at various orphanages, and visiting Vietnamese families. Captain Jones, the only woman Marine who attended Vietnamese language school, taught English to a class of Vietnamese policemen.

Captain Filkins, interested in an orphanage for blind girls, solicited soap, clothing, linens, toys, and supplies from the women Marine companies at home. In her letter she wrote, "They are rather confined in their small, dark world of the orphanage so they seem quite thrilled when visitors come to see them Many of these children are lucky if they are picked up and held for a few minutes each week."⁸¹



Assigned to administrative duties in Saigon, GySgt Donna Hollowell Murray, shown here in Tanh Anh, Vietnam, in 1970, gave time to work with children in outlying areas.

One woman Marine in particular, Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar (later Esquibel), who touched the lives of Vietnamese orphans, was nominated for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, and was immortalized in a painting by Marine artist Cliff Young. During her 15 months in Saigon, Staff Sergeant Salazar essentially took over a MACV civic action project involving the St. Vincent de Paul orphanage.

In a letter dated 10 September 1969, to Gunnery Sergeant Helen A. Dowd, she told of her work with the children:

I don't remember if I mentioned to you that I had been working with the orphanage supported by MACV. It is not a big one—only 75 children ages from a few weeks old to about 11 or 12 years of age. They are precious and quite lively. . . . This whole orphanage is taken care of by two Catholic sisters. . . . One of them is rather advanced in age (about in her 60's) and the other is quite young and active. Still and all, Gunny, these two souls work themselves to death. . . . The two sisters are Vietnamese who speak no English

at all. . . . And me? I know a limited number of broken phrases and words in Vietnamese. . . .

Since I've been working at the orphanage, I've had to overcome much repugnance. There's a lot of sickness and disease here in Vietnam. . . . So when I say the orphanage it doesn't have the same connotation that it does back in the states where the children are well fed . . . and healthy for at least they have medical facilities and medicines available. These children have nothing! If the WM company is wondering about any projects for Christmas here is something you can think about. Anything and everything is needed.⁸²

Determined that these children would have a party, Staff Sergeant Salazar personally contacted Marine units for contributions, arranged a site and bus transportation, enlisted interested people to help, and wrapped individual gifts for each child. Her interest continued after the holidays and in spite of 11-hour workdays, six days a week, she was able to influence other Marines to follow her lead in working at the orphanage. Nominating her for the Unsung Heroine Award, her commanding officer wrote: "Her unusual

and untiring efforts to assist these otherwise forgotten children reflect great credit upon herself, the United States Marine Corps, this command, and the United States.”⁸³

Staff Sergeant Salazar was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for meritorious achievement in the performance of her duties during the period 10 October 1969 to 10 January 1970 while serving with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam awarded her the Vietnamese Service Medal for her work with the orphans.

Women Marines in Vietnam normally numbered eight or 10 enlisted women and one or two officers at any one time for a total of about 28 enlisted women and eight officers between 1967 and 1973. Their letters and interviews reveal their apprehension before arriving in Saigon, their satisfaction with their tour, and their increased sense of being a Marine.

Women Marines in Marine Security Guard Battalion

Traditionally, women Marines had not been assigned to the Marine Security Guard Battalion, commonly referred to as embassy duty. The primary mission of an embassy Marine is to safeguard classified material vital to the United States' interests and to protect American lives and property abroad. In 1967 the first two women officers joined the Marine Security Guard Battalion, not as guards, but as personnel officers. First Lieutenant Charlene M. Summers (later Itchkawich) served with Company C, Manila, Philippines, and Warrant Officer Mary E. Pease was assigned to Company D, Panama Canal Zone. The following year, Captain Gail M. Reals reported to Company B, Beirut, Lebanon.⁸⁴

Women Marines Overseas—Summary

Opportunities for women Marines to serve outside the continental United States had been extremely

Sgt Doris Denton receives the Joint Service Commendation Medal from MajGen Richard F. Shaffer, USA, assistant chief of staff, J-5, in Saigon, South Vietnam, on 5 March 1969.



limited from World War II to 1966. Billets available in Europe never accommodated more than nine or 10 women, officers and enlisted. Until October 1966, Hawaii was the only location in the Pacific at which WMs could serve. On 30 June 1966, 3.7 percent, or 63 women Marines, 56 in Hawaii and seven at foreign locations, were serving outside the continental limits.⁸⁵ On 30 June 1971, 9.3 percent, or 209 women were serving in the following locations:⁸⁶

	Officer	Enlisted
MCAF, Futema, Okinawa	3	20
MCB, Camp Butler, Okinawa	6	37
MCAS, Iwakuni, Japan	5	34
FMFPac, Camp Smith, Hawaii	14	59
MCAS, Kaneohe, Hawaii	5	9
AFSE, Naples, Italy	1	1
EUCOM, Stuttgart, Germany	1	3
MarDet, London, England	0	1
MAS NATO Brussels, Belgium	1	0
MACV, Saigon, Vietnam	2	6
MarSecGdBn, Hong Kong	1	0
TOTAL	39	170

The location of the billets and the numerical requirements change from time to time but the policy of expanded overseas assignments for women in the Marine Corps made during the years 1966-1972, following the recommendations of the Pepper Board, has persisted.

These years saw remarkable changes made in the utilization, training, and assignment of women Marines and marked success in recruiting, officer procurement, and retention efforts. The Pepper Board reported its findings and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of women Marines in 1965 at a time when the war in Vietnam demanded maximum effort and performance of each Marine. Many questioned the price tag that would accompany implementation of the study group's recommendations; others recognized the costliness of inadequately trained and disillusioned Marines. Largely due to the leadership and untiring efforts of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Greene; the chairman of the Woman Marine Program Study Group, Lieutenant General Pepper; and the Director of Women Marines, Colonel Bishop, notable progress was made and the status of women placed on a firmer footing than any time previously in the history of the Corps.

Utilization and Numbers: Snell Committee, 1973-1977

Strength, 1973-1977—New Occupational Fields—Military Police—Presiding Judges—Breaking the Tradition Bandsmen—Women Marines in the Fleet Marine Force—Women in Command—1973-1977 Summary

There was, in the early 1970s, an increased awareness of the phenomenon called equal opportunity for women.¹ It permeated the family, the schoolroom, business, religion, and the military. In all fairness, laws, customs, and prejudices notwithstanding, a case can be made for the advantageous position of servicewomen compared to women in education, business, and industry. There were, however, recognized shortcomings which had to be dealt with. The advent of the all-volunteer force and the national women's liberation movement were leading to increased use of women in the military. On 1 September 1972, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., recommended a plan tailored to meet a goal stated as "allowing women an equal opportunity to contribute their talents and to achieve full professional status in the Navy."² The Marine Corps had no such plan.

One week later, the Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, directed the services to develop by 30 November 1972 detailed equal opportunity/affirmative action plans for minorities and servicewomen. As a result, the Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower) of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Ormond R. Simpson, proposed an ad hoc committee to be chaired by Colonel Albert W. Snell. The committee was tasked with developing a plan of action, objectives, and milestones for a program to increase equal opportunity for women Marines.

The membership of Colonel Snell's committee varied from time to time but included representatives of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1; Deputy Director of Personnel; Director Division of Reserve; and Director Women Marines. Included were Lieutenant Colonel Jenny Wrenn and Major Barbara E. Dolyak. At the initial, formal meetings, the committee established the goal to "increase the effectiveness and utilization for all women Marines to fully utilize their abilities in support of Marine Corps objectives." Five specific objectives identified to accomplish the goal were:

- a. To identify and eliminate all discrimination based solely on sex.
- b. To ensure to women Marines equal opportunity for as-

signment to and within noncombat occupational fields.

- c. To provide the opportunity for women Marines to obtain technical and professional schooling at all levels.

- d. To provide equal opportunity to women Marines for progression and advancement through duty assignments.

- e. To ensure equal economic opportunity for women Marines.³

It happened that the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Central All-Volunteer Task Force on the Utilization of Military Women, headed by Colonel Helen A. Wilson, USMCR, published a separate but related study in December 1972. This report specifically recommended that the Marine Corps:

- (1) Intensify its recruiting efforts for enlisted women.
- (2) Open additional job specialties to women.
- (3) Take action to reduce attrition rates to a level more comparable to that being experienced by the other services.
- (4) Advise . . . after six months the results achieved in (1), (2), and (3) above and how these results affect its FY 1974 plans for female military strength in Marine Corps.⁴

A further consideration by the Snell Committee was the report of a task group chaired by the Judge Advocate General of the Navy to review the portion of Titles 10 and 37 of the United States Code which differentiated between the treatment of men and women.

Taking all into consideration, the Snell Committee identified 17 separate tasks needed to attain its objectives. A background position paper containing the 17 tasks was then staffed to appropriate Headquarters agencies for comment. Colonel Margaret A. Brewer was given the job of reviewing the comments, summarizing the recommendations, and making appropriate modifications.

The recommendations that evolved included several concerning promotion boards that would require legislative action. Most, however, challenged the Marine Corps' policies and regulations that barred women from occupational fields or schools based solely on sex. The fields of logistics, military police and corrections, and aircraft maintenance, all closed to women, were singled out as possibilities for immediate action while all other noncombat fields would be studied to determine their appropriateness for women Marines. Two



LCpl Brenda Hockenbush, in 1972 the first woman Marine to graduate from the Test Instrument Course, Albany, Georgia, examines a piece of electronic equipment with fellow student, LCpl William Day.

of the most unorthodox ideas presented were the plan that a pilot program be established to assign women to stateside Fleet Marine Forces and the recommendation that:

... the prohibition in the *Marine Corps Manual* which limits women officers to succeeding to command only at those activities which have the administration of Women Marines as their primary function be eliminated.⁵

According to Lieutenant Colonel Barbara Dolyak, a member of the Snell Committee, it came as a surprise when the Commandant approved all recommendations on 14 November 1973. On the final page of the report, General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., penned, "O.K.—let's move out!"⁶

Strength, 1973-1977

In April 1973 a goal was set of 3,100 women Marines by 30 June 1977.⁷ This represented a 30 percent increase of women's strength and completely disregarded the traditional figure of one percent of total Marine Corps enlisted strength. Subsequently, the target date was moved up to 1 January 1976. During the summer of 1976, the Commandant, General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., responding to requests from commanders for additional women, to the improved effectiveness of women in the Corps, and to the realities of the all-volunteer force, approved an additional increase in the size of the woman Marine force.⁸ The change was planned to be implemented over a six-year period beginning 1 October 1976, with a recruiting goal for the year of 1,700 women or 164 over the current annual

input. Beginning with fiscal year 1978, in October 1977 the Corps aimed to recruit 2,500 women annually. Then in March 1977, appearing before a House Armed Services subcommittee, General Wilson made the surprise announcement that the Marine Corps expected to have 10,000 women in its ranks by 1985.⁹ Incremental increases were planned based on logistical limitations related to uniform supplies and billeting space rather than on need or availability of qualified applicants. In 1975 18 percent of all women who enlisted in the Marine Corps had attended college and some had baccalaureate degrees.¹⁰ In 1977, both recruiting and officer procurement quotas were easily met with many fine young women being turned away. On 30 June 1977, the strength of the active duty women Marines was 407 officers and 3,423 enlisted women for a total of 3,830.

The reenlistment and retention rate for women improved to the point where in 1974, the rate of retention for first-term WMs bettered that of male Marines, 9.9 percent to 7.9 percent. In 1975, it was 10.4 percent for women compared to 7.9 percent for the total Marine Corps.¹¹ No one factor is responsible for the improved recruiting and retention of women. The indications point to a generation of women awakened to new horizons, improvements in the woman Marine program brought on by the Pepper Board and the Snell Committee, and the positive action taken by the Commandants to publicize to all Marines the role of women in the Marine Corps.

New Occupational Fields

The Snell Committee had recommended that the Marine Corps regulations and policies not governed by law be reviewed to revise or eliminate those which discriminated solely on the basis of sex without rational and valid reason, and that all noncombat MOSs be examined to determine which could be made available to women. Since a task analysis of all noncombat occupational fields was already underway at Headquarters and would not be completed for several years, it was further recommended that certain fields be opened immediately as a sign of good faith. For officers, logistics, military police and corrections, and aircraft maintenance were suggested, and for enlisted women, the same three fields plus utilities and electronics. Because of some disagreement and in view of the ongoing study of all noncombat MOSs, only logistics and military police and corrections were approved for officers and utilities and military police and corrections for enlisted women.

The final breakthrough, dropping all barriers except those grounded in law, was made on 15 July 1975 when the Commandant, General Wilson, approved the assignment of women to all occupational fields except the four considered combat-related, infantry (03), artillery (08), armor (18), and flight crews (75). Management limitations, preservation of a rotation base for male Marines, equal opportunity regardless of sex for job assignments and promotions, need for adequate facilities and housing for WMs, and availability of nondeployable billets, of necessity, affected the number of women assigned to some fields, but this was truly a decisive change.¹²

Military Police

Records indicate that there were five women with a military police MOS in 1952 but a search of the records failed to reveal who they were or what duties they performed. It is likely that they were former WRs since the policy after 1948 had been not to assign women to this field.

The Corps' first known post-World War II military policewoman, in January 1974, was Lance Corporal Harriett F. Voisine, a WM who had a bachelor of science degree in criminology with a major in police science and administration. She had worked with the Police Department in Westminster, California, before enlisting in July 1971 and, after recruit training, served for two and one-half years in the Provost Marshal Office at Parris Island. Taking courses on her own in juvenile delinquency; vice and narcotics; criminal law; and arrest, search, and seizure procedures, she was a

Sgt Karen Cottingham, a trained telephone switchboard repairman, checks the level of battery acid in the standby power source, at the Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California, on 4 February 1977.



PFC Regina T. Musser, first woman Marine tank mechanic, works on the optic unit of a tank turret while assigned to the Tracked Vehicle Maintenance Unit at Camp Pendleton, California, in 1974.

natural candidate for the military police field when it was finally opened to women Marines.¹³ Lance Corporal Voisine, given on-the-job training by the recruit depot's MPs, was used on the desk, on traffic control details, and on motorized patrols.

Two women Marines, Privates M. B. Ogborn and J. E. Welchel, were the first to attend the seven-week Military Police School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, graduating in April 1975.¹⁴ Private Mary F. Bungcayo, who graduated from the same course the following month was assigned to the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, for duty. In a 1977 interview, Corporal Bungcayo stated that she met some male opposition at first, but no restrictions. She worked on the desk and on patrol; she responded to fires and flight emergencies; and she stood guard on the gate. Corporal Bungcayo, who joined the Marine Corps with the guarantee of military police work, believed that on the job she was given the same responsibilities as the male MPs.¹⁵

Second Lieutenant Debra J. Baughman, the first woman officer in the military police field, was assigned to the Provost Marshal Office at Camp Lejeune after graduation from the 35th Woman Officer Basic Course in March 1975. She entered the field with a degree in corrections but no experience. At Camp Lejeune she was assigned as platoon leader for a platoon of MPs and in the opinion of Colonel Valeria F. Hilgart, the base G-1, "She did a topnotch job."¹⁶



1stLt Debra J. Baughman, first woman officer in the military police field, inspects her platoon at Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in the summer of 1975.

The next two officers to enter the 5800 field, military police, were Second Lieutenants Mary A. Krusa and Judith A. Cataldo. Neither had any police experience but both had majored in criminology and the police science field in college. In January 1976 all three attended the Military Police Officer Orientation Course at Fort McClellan, Alabama, to obtain formally the 5803 MOS. After graduation in February 1976, Second Lieutenant Krusa reported to El Toro as the assistant operations officer for the Provost Marshal Office and Second Lieutenant Cataldo reported to Cherry Point for assignment as the officer in charge of the Traffic Investigation, Traffic Control, and Pass and Identification Section. Second Lieutenant Baughman returned to Camp Lejeune. Each of the three officers had received more extensive training in their MOS to include attendance at Northwestern University's Traffic Institute at Evanston, Illinois.¹⁷

On the subject of police work for women, Second Lieutenant Cataldo, in March 1977, wrote:

Speaking for myself, I love the field. It is a constantly changing challenge. Twenty-five male MPs work for me and I am given a great deal of responsibility. I feel that after the initial testing and proving period I have been fully accepted. I would recommend the field to other women trained in it as it is still growing and developing professionally. . . . It frequently demands 24 hour duty (PMO duty officer) five days per month and proficiency with various weapons. . . . For women interested in the police field it offers a great deal.¹⁸

Presiding Judges

There were seldom more than one or two women Marine lawyers on active duty at one time, and it was news when in 1970, First Lieutenant Patricia Murphy was named a certified military judge. But in 1974, it was Captain Eileen M. Albertson, second woman to

be certified a military judge, who became the first to preside in a courtroom. A graduate of Bloomsburg State College and the Marshall Wythe School of Law at the College of William and Mary, she served in the Marine Corps Reserve for a six-year tour before going on active duty. She served nine months in Judge Advocate General School for military lawyers at Charlottesville, Virginia; 14 months on Okinawa as prosecutor and foreign claims commissioner; and some months as defense counsel at Quantico.¹⁹

As a judge, Captain Albertson was praised by her colleague, Captain David A. Schneider, who said, "I would give her the highest compliment—I'd call her a professional. She shows that she is more interested in justice and fairness than formality or speed . . ." ²⁰ Her former commanding officer, Colonel Joseph R. Motelewski, commented bluntly, "She is one of the finest lawyers I've ever worked with."²¹

In an effort to attract persons of needed skills, the Marine Corps inaugurated a program of direct Reserve commissions for those who met the criteria. Reserve Marine Major Sara J. Harper, a judge of the Municipal Court of Cleveland, Ohio, entered the Corps as a lawyer and served a number of tours on active duty over a four-year period. Then in 1977, she was appointed a military judge by General Louis H. Wilson, in ceremonies in his office.²²

Breaking the Tradition

Improved educational level of women recruits, a changed attitude of society toward the role of working women, especially in technical and professional fields, and an openmindedness in the Corps brought on by the Pepper Board and fostered by the Snell Committee, and finally the Commandant's key decision in July 1975, combined to increase the assignments of women to a greater variety of occupational fields. For example:

In November 1973, Second Lieutenant Patricia M. Zaudtke was assigned as one of the first two WM motor transport officers.²³

In June 1974, Captain Shirley L. Bowen was the only woman and the first woman Marine to graduate from the 34-week Advanced Communication Officer Course.²⁴

Private Mary P. McKeown made history at the Army's Ordnance Center and School, Aberdeen, Maryland, when she became the first WM to attend the Metal Body Repair Course. Her classroom instruction included practical work in gas welding, exterior finishing of metal bodies, glass cutting, and



Capt Eileen M. Albertson, first woman Marine military judge to preside in a courtroom, administered the foreign claims section and acted as trial counsel at the Camp Smedley D. Butler Law Center in 1972.

instruction in inert gas metal welding techniques.²⁵

First Lieutenant Dian S. George, in 1975, was the first woman Marine to be assigned to the inspector-instructor staff of an all-male Reserve unit, Headquarters and Service Company, Supply Battalion, 4th Force Service Support Group, at Newport News, Virginia. Previously she had served as the assistant SASSY officer at Cherry Point, North Carolina. SASSY is the acronym for Supported Activity Supply System, which was, at the time, a new computerized way of keeping track of all Marine Corps equipment. Thus it was not merely coincidental that First Lieutenant George found herself at the Newport News unit, the first Reserve company to have the SASSY system, one which tied into the computer at Camp Lejeune. During drill weekend she worked on the organization and supervision of the training program which included computer programming and key punch operations skills. In addition she served as personnel, public relations, and recruiting officer on the staff headed by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Esposito. For the lieutenant, being in an all-male outfit was not entirely new since she had participated in the 1974 pilot program permitting women to serve in the Fleet Marine Forces.²⁶

Private First Class Cathy E. Smith was the first woman Marine to attend the Water Supply and Plumbing Course at Camp Lejeune. The training which began on 14 July 1975 was concerned mainly with water purification, i.e., supplying fresh water to Marines in the field.²⁷

On 28 January 1977, Sergeant Deborah A. Rubel, a mechanic in the fuel and electrical shop, Motor Transport and Maintenance Company, 2d Maintenance Battalion, Force Troops, 2d Force Service Support Group, was named Force Troops 2d FSSG Marine of the Quarter, high praise for a woman serving in the FMF in a nontraditional job.²⁸

Second Lieutenant Jo Anne Kelly became, in January 1977, the first of four women in her occupational field to qualify for the 7210 MOS, Air Defense Control Officer. She finished initial training at Twenty-nine Palms in August 1976 and then reported to the Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, where she completed the required number of live intercepts in tactical flight missions.²⁹

On 9 January 1977, three WMs, Sergeants Connie Dehart and Cynthia Martin, and Corporal Geneva Jones, were reported to be the first women to earn their wings while serving as flight attendants on the C-9B Skytrain. After a two-week familiarization course at the McDonnell Douglas School, the women's duties included loading baggage and cargo, and serving meals. In an interview in March 1977, Sergeant Jones indicated that there was no resentment shown by male Marines with whom she worked, but at least one lieutenant colonel was uncomfortable about her work as

Sgt J. S. Burke, a tractor-trailer driver with Base Material Battalion, Camp Pendleton, California, adjusts the chains of her rig on 11 February 1977.



he ordered her out of the cargo compartment and loaded his own baggage.³⁰

Private First Class Pamela Loper, the first woman Marine to hold a tractor-trailer license at Camp Lejeune since World War II, was described in April 1977 by Lieutenant Colonel John F. Drummond, base motor transport officer, as "... a much better driver than some of our experienced men." Private First Class Loper drove a large tractor-trailer rig, known as a "semi" or "18 wheeler." She obtained her license after passing tests on handling the vehicle and hooking up and unhooking the trailer.³¹

Private First Class Katie Jones Dixon, Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron-32's first WM jet mechanic, worked on jet engines and components which MAG-32's squadrons sent to its power plant for repair. Extensive schooling prepared her to do the type of intermediate maintenance that the squadrons were not authorized to perform.³²

Private First Class Gail Faith Morise, first enlisted woman to attend the 12-week Automotive Mechanics School at Camp Lejeune, was also the first WM to be assigned to Cherry Point's Motor Transport Division.³³

Bandsmen

Well before the final verdict was in on opening new occupational fields to women, an old one became available once more. Until 1973, the musical MOS 5500 was designated for wartime duty only. Women Marine bandsmen were a rare sight after the demobilization of Camp Lejeune's renowned MCWR band of World War II. In 1967, Colonel Bishop reported that Corporals Donna L. Correll and Marjorie W. Groht had joined the Marine Corps Supply Center band at Albany and played in ceremonies on 10 November.³⁴ These two Marines, members of the first group of WMs to report to Albany, played the clarinet and trumpet and were believed to be the only women performing with a Marine band at the time. In 1969, Lance Corporal Judy A. Tiffany volunteered on a part-time basis as a cymbal player with the newly formed Drum and Bugle Team at the Marine Barracks, Treasure Island, California. And then, in 1971, five WMs, Corporals Sue Redding and Nancy Wright, Lance Corporals Sue Deleskiewicz and Joan Mahaffey, and Private First Class Martha Eveland became the first WM musical unit since World War II when they formed the WM Drum Section of Treasure Island's Drum and Bugle Team.³⁵

Private Jay C. Clark was assigned the 5500 MOS in February 1973 while in recruit training at Parris Island.



PFC Katie J. Dixon, H&MS-32 mechanic, safety wires the fuel control of an A-4 Skyhawk power plant in the squadron's powerplant section, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina, in 1977.

She was assigned to the post band and later sent to Basic Music School in Little Creek, Virginia. Upon completion of the six-month course, she served in the bands in Hawaii and at the Recruit Depot at San Diego, California.

The famed U.S. Marine Band of Washington, D.C., however, remained an all-male bastion until 1973, when, due to a critical shortage of certain instrumentalists, the band sought and received permission to enlist women.³⁶ Elizabeth A. Eitel, an oboist and University of Montana student, became, in April 1973, the first woman to audition and to be accepted. Before she graduated and subsequently enlisted on 30 July, another young woman, Ruth S. Johnson, a University of Michigan graduate, joined the band on 16 May, becoming its first woman member. Like all members of the band, the women were appointed to the rank of staff sergeant and were not required to attend recruit training. Gunnery Sergeant Johnson, in 1977, was the Marine Band's principal French hornist.³⁷

At first there were several conditions imposed by the band. The women, for example, were to wear the male bandsmen uniforms. Colonel Margaret A. Brewer, Director of Women Marines, satisfied that this new

opportunity was available to women, prudently offered no opposition. It was soon obvious that the men's trousers were ill-fitting and difficult to tailor for the women, so new uniforms, following the traditional pattern but proportioned for the female figure, were designed. Eventually long skirts were added to the wardrobe. The WM hat posed some problems, especially in wet weather as it required careful blocking to keep in shape. The band had a white vinyl model designed and asked Colonel Brewer for her opinion. With its gold emblem, red cap cord, and semi-shiny fabric, she found it unattractive at first, but agreed to a test period. The vinyl hat not only looked fine when worn during performances, but it solved the maintenance problem. Recognizing the practicality of a hat that can withstand rain and snow, the white vinyl was later copied for use by women MPs.³⁸

By July 1977, the Marine Band counted in its ranks the following 10 women musicians:³⁹

Gunnery Sergeant Gail A. Bowlin	flute
Gunnery Sergeant Elizabeth A. Eitel	oboe
Staff Sergeant Elnora Teopaco Figueroa	violin
Staff Sergeant Michelle Foley	oboe
Gunnery Sergeant Carol Hayes	viola
Gunnery Sergeant Ruth S. Johnson	French horn
Staff Sergeant Denna S. Purdie	cello
Staff Sergeant Linda D. Stolarczyk	cello
Staff Sergeant Vickie J. Yanics	violin
Staff Sergeant Dyane Wright	bassoon

Women Marines in the Fleet Marine Force

The Snell Committee recommended that a pilot program be established to assign women to stateside division, wing, or force service regiment headquarters in noncombat rear echelon billets such as disbursing, data systems, administration, etc. General Cushman, Commandant of the Marine Corps, approved the concept on 14 November 1973.⁴⁰ In February 1974, a message was sent to FMF commanders notifying them of a yet-to-be published change in policy which would permit the assignment of women to FMF billets involving service support, aviation support, or communication occupational specialties that would not require them to deploy with the assault echelon of the command if a contingency arose. The legal restrictions that women not be assigned duty in aircraft that are engaged in combat missions nor on vessels of the Navy other than hospital ships and transports were included.

The 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and the 1st Marine Division were designated as the commands to participate in a six-month pilot program, and they were



First woman Marine music unit since 1945 was the drum section of the Marine Barracks, Treasure Island Drum and Bugle Team, 1970-1971: (left to right) Cpls Sue Conley and Nancy Wright, LCpl Sue Deleskiewicz, PFC Martha Eveland, and LCpl Joan Mahaffey.

provided information on the grade and MOSs of the women selected for FMF assignments. The message stated, "These Marines will be joined on the rolls of, and administered by, the headquarters indicated. Their duties will be consistent with the requirement of the billet to which assigned."⁴¹ This simple statement, referring to Marines without the usual modifier, women, bespoke an important change in attitude. As an adjunct to the pilot program, all FMF commanders were asked to identify billets within their headquarters considered suitable for women Marines.

Originally, 13 women were selected to take part in the experiment: seven to the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and six to the 1st Marine Division. Actually, nine WMs, four officers and five enlisted women, were assigned to the wing. They were:

First Lieutenant Maralee J. Johnson
First Lieutenant Dian S. George
Second Lieutenant Vicki B. Taylor
Second Lieutenant Margaret A. Humphrey
Gunnery Sergeant Sharyl E. Shefiz
Sergeant Charlene K. Wiese

Corporal Pamela S. Scott
Corporal Eva J. Lugo
Lance Corporal Marsha A. Douglas

In an interview published in the *Windsock*, the Cherry Point newspaper, in July 1974, Corporal Scott said, "At first I heard there might be some problems because men didn't want women in the Wing, but everyone here has been helpful, and I haven't had any problem at all."⁴² Sergeant Wiese, accounting analyst with the comptroller section, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing said, "There was a lot of apprehension between myself and the Marine I was working with, but it's gone now and things are great."⁴³ Others commented on the changes brought by being administratively attached to the wing rather than Woman Marine Detachment 2, a small unit where everyone knew everyone else.

The six women assigned to the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton were Captain Karyl L. Moesel, First Lieutenant Maria T. Hernandez, Second Lieutenant Mary S. Burns, Gunnery Sergeant Esther F. Peters, Ser-

geant Judith A. Alexander, and Sergeant Lynn J. Powell.

At the end of the six-month experimental period, in November 1974, the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, Brigadier General William L. McCulloch, reported that, ". . . the WMs have managed to assimilate necessary knowledge of FMF-peculiar systems to allow them to be assets to their respective sections"⁴⁴ and, he continued:

It is this command's interpretation . . . that WMs assigned to FMF commands are deployable to advanced areas as long as they are not deployed with assault echelon . . . and are, therefore, not necessarily bound to rear echelon . . . billets . . . This command enthusiastically supports assignments of WMs to CONUS FMF commands and foresees no insurmountable problems associated with program. Assignment of WMs would provide source of talent and critical skills and would ease skill shortages within the First MARDIV.⁴⁵

The Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, Major General Ralph H. Spanjer, in his assessment of the pilot program, noted that the nine WMs *GySgts Ruth Johnson (left) and Beth Eitel (right), first women members of the U.S. Marine Band, frequently performed with the Band's Woodwind Quintet.*



were rapidly assimilated into the wing staff, and no problems were observed in military courtesy, appearance, or bearing. The physical fitness testing had been conducted by the senior woman officer without difficulty and with notable success. He continued that the small number involved precluded any effect on deployment and during field exercises, the women Marines had a positive effect on the headquarters by remaining in garrison and continuing the daily administrative routine. Finally, he submitted:

The pilot program of assigning Women Marines to 2d Marine Aircraft Wing has thus far been successful in terms of orientation, capability, and performance. Realizing the practicality of assigning Woman Marines to CONUS Fleet Marine Force Commands, it is felt that the program should be continued.⁴⁶

The commanding general of FMFPac, on the subject of women in ConUS FMF commands, wrote: "This headquarters regards utilization of women Marines in FMF commands both feasible and desirable providing such assignment does not adversely affect combat readiness. . . ." And he offered the recommendation that:

. . . Marine Corps education and training programs be modified to:

1. Increase emphasis on FMF-related instruction and training for women Marines, to include extension school courses and, if possible additional quotas to intermediate and high level schools.
2. Incorporate into Human Relations and Leadership training consideration of the role of women Marines in the FMF.⁴⁷

As part of the pilot program, the commanders of the division, aircraft wings, force troops, and force service regiments identified rear echelon billets totaling 75 officer and 450 enlisted that could be filled by women without requiring them to deploy with the assault echelon. The billets included supply, disbursing, communications, intelligence, administration, data systems, and legal specialties. When new MOSs were opened to women by the 1975 decision, even more FMF billets were considered suitable for women Marines.

Women in the 1st Marine Division were featured in an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* in September 1976. Among those mentioned were Second Lieutenant Michele D. Venne, combat engineer officer, who was the first woman officer to attend Combat Engineer School and finished first in her class; Lance Corporal Victoria Carrillo, a plumber and water supplyman who, at the time, was the only woman

water purification expert in the Marine Corps; Second Lieutenant Carol Sue Lamb, the only female motor transport officer in the FMF, who was serving as assistant division motor transport officer and later served as a division supply group platoon commander; Corporal Cynthia Robinson, an electrician, who performed duties such as pole line construction and the stringing of power lines; Second Lieutenant Laura A. Hull, headquarters battalion adjutant; and Lance Corporal Kimberly Greene, only woman coxswain in the Marine Corps. Lance Corporal Greene, who grew up on Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island, practiced her seamanship in the Corps by handling a 58-foot landing craft which could carry up to 40 combat-loaded Marines for an assault on an enemy beach.

There were at the time, 42 women in the 1st Marine Division, and their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. White, confessed that while the obvious problems such as restroom facilities and billeting were nettlesome, they were not difficult. The women Marines lived in motel-like BEQs with their male colleagues, since it was thought that segregated barracks would run counter to unit integrity.

The men found that women tend to keep their quarters better policed, but Colonel White soon learned that:

... there is a greater sense of urgency from the women when equipment, such as washing machines, fails. The women seem to be more conscious of how they look in uniform ... and when it comes to wearing sidearms which might make a hippy woman look hippier, an option of uniform is allowed. They can wear either skirts or utility outfits.⁴⁸

Anticipated problems resulting from men and women living in the same barracks did not materialize as the division men seemed to take a protective attitude toward the WMs. Barracks and office language was noticeably improved, but the feminine presence apparently caused little resentment on that score, since Lieutenant Colonel White was quoted as saying, "The division is more fun with the girls."⁴⁹

The women unanimously endorsed FMF assignments for WMs. Lance Corporal Debora Pederson, a correspondence clerk in the headquarters battalion adjutant's office, said, "... at Pendleton, we are treated as Marines, not specified as women Marines."⁵⁰ First Lieutenant Venne found senior officers dubious when she was assigned as a division engineer, responsible for equipment used in bridge building, grading roads, and other construction projects associated with combat. But the skepticism was because she was a lieutenant and not because she was a woman.

In July 1977, there were 610 women Marines serving in the FMF, 96 officers and 514 enlisted women.⁵¹ The policy to assign them only to stateside organizations was still in effect, but individual exceptions had been made where FMF commanders overseas had specifically asked for women Marines.

Women in Command

The *Marine Corps Manual*, from 1948 until 1973, laid down the rule that women could command only those units that were predominantly female. At least one exception was made when Captain Jeanne Fleming was assigned as the commanding officer of Company B, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, from July 1956 until September 1958. The company consisted of all officer students at Quantico, less those attending The Basic School. Her duties were primarily administrative, but it was quite unusual, nevertheless, for men to report in and find a woman commanding officer. One of them was Major Albert W. Snell, later to head the Ad Hoc Committee in 1973.

After approving the Snell Committee recommendation that women be permitted to command units other than woman Marine companies, Generalushman announced the new policy at a press conference in southern California in December 1973. He added, as a side comment, that, indeed, Camp Pendleton was soon to make such an assignment. According to the woman destined to become the Marine Corps' first woman commander of a nearly all male battalion, Colonel Mary E. Bane, the general's pronouncement was news to the command at Camp Pendleton. The press picked up on the Commandant's statement immediately and all other topics of his news conference were forgotten.

Colonel Bane, who had been filling a colonel's billet as an assistant chief of staff for personnel services, was informed by the Assistant Chief of Staff (Manpower), "You have been selected to sacrifice, Evie."⁵² The day following the Commandant's announcement, the commanding general, Brigadier General Robert L. Nichols, named Colonel Bane to be Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California. The furor was astonishing. In less than 24 hours, she had to change her telephone to an unlisted number. She had spent a sleepless night answering calls from the media, women's liberation organizations, cranks, and friends. In a short time she received over 300 letters,



Capt Kathleen V. Ables takes command of a predominantly male unit, Supply Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, in 1975.

both congratulatory and abusive. There were requests for autographed photographs and an 80-year-old retired Navy chief petty officer wrote to General Earl E. Anderson, Assistant Commandant, and asked for a set of Colonel Bane's first lieutenant bars. Mail came from Germany, Vietnam, Korea, and the Philippines, and from such diverse sources as the American Nazi Party and the National Organization of Women. In fact, the letters continued to arrive two years after she left the command.

Headquarters and Service Battalion was a unit of 1,700 Marines, including a woman Marine company. Colonel Bane's immediate staff, the executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Topping, and the battalion sergeant major, were all very supportive. She, herself, felt unprepared for the billet and resented being assigned because of sex rather than qualifications. In due time the commotion subsided, and business at the battalion went on as usual. Eleven months later, Brigadier General Paul Graham assumed command of Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, and reassigned Colonel Bane for, in her words, ". . . precisely the same reason for which I was assigned — because I was a woman."⁵³ He just did not want a woman as the commanding officer of a headquarters battalion. In fact, he did not want a woman in a colonel's billet and Colonel Bane, who had held the responsible position of an assistant chief of staff and had been a battalion commander for 11 months, was reassigned as the base human affairs officer, a major's billet.⁵⁴

When Captain Kathleen V. Abbott Ables took command of Supply Company, Headquarters and Service

Battalion, Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California, on 7 March 1975, there was none of the hoopla that accompanied Colonel Bane's appointment. It was, just the same, an historic event, a woman in command of a predominantly male company. Looking back, Major Ables was not certain what prompted the battalion commander to assign a woman to the job. The billet was open, and she was the next senior captain in the battalion. She wrote, "The prevailing attitude was that it was my job as a captain, and that I could and would handle it professionally."⁵⁵

The company first sergeant, Gayle R. Heitman, made it known to the NCOs and SNCOs that he had worked with Captain Ables before and their expressed fears were unfounded. Only the company clerk, a sergeant, had real difficulty accepting a woman commanding officer, and he went to the battalion commander several times, in vain, to ask for a transfer.

In the beginning, as might be expected, inspections were the cause of some concern. Personnel inspections had been held without weapons at Supply Company so that when Captain Ables arrived on the scene she merely had to learn the details of male uniform regulations and personal appearance standards. As for quarters inspections, it was not difficult to respect the privacy of Marine shift workers who were apt to be sleeping or relaxing in the barracks during the day since the battalion was billeted in motel-style rooms rather than in open squadbays. First Sergeant Heitman would knock and if there was no answer, he would

unlock the door and go in. If the room was empty, Captain Ables followed him in to inspect. The procedure was reversed in the women's BEQ. Male Marines learned something about a woman's idea of a clean barracks. In a 1977 letter, Major Ables wrote:

BEQ inspections caused some heartburn in the company for about a month after I became commanding officer. With two of us inspecting, a large number of previously undetected discrepancies were found. One morning, we arrived at one room to find one of the occupants leaning over a table with a cloth in his hand. I made some comment about making the final touchup, and he replied, "Yes, m'am. We hear you're a real stickler on dust."⁵⁶

Nonjudicial punishment is always unpleasant but with a woman commanding officer could be awkward as well, depending upon the nature of the offense. One case involved language that neither the accused nor the witnesses wanted to use in front of a lady. A relatively simple solution was found: the offending statement was written out and all parties read and signed it.

Five months after taking over Supply Company, Captain Ables was assigned as commanding officer of her second and larger nearly all-male company, Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, which consisted of about 330 men and 40 women. Again, the first sergeant, Gene A. Lafond, was a key to a successful tour. Integrated battalions and companies such as this one gave rise to some interesting adjustments, notably in the area of physical training. In this instance, the battalion organized a competitive seven-mile conditioning hike. The course included a climb over hills behind the main camp, but because the WMs did not have adequate boots for the cross-country portion, a seven-mile road march was planned for them to be lead by Captain Ables. The battalion commander had arranged to take her company himself. The women's platoons from each company were combined to form a single WM unit and

scheduled to hike on the day before Captain Ables' Headquarters Company.

Having finished her portion of training, Captain Ables was challenged by her husband, Major Charles K. Ables, to lead her own company the next day. She admitted that it was a struggle to run-walk to keep from straggling. It happened that she was not only not the last to complete the course, but she helped to push a Marine over the finish line, and Headquarters Company won the competition. Afterwards, it was decided that future company hikes would be conducted with men and women participating together, maintaining unit integrity.

An interesting aspect of Captain Ables' experience as a commanding officer is the fact that her husband was a member of her command, no doubt a unique situation in Marine Corps history.

In addition to the command tours of Colonel Bane and Captain Ables, other assignments evidenced some change in philosophy and policy. In 1974, Lieutenant Colonel Annie M. Trowsdale was assigned as executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, and Sergeant Major Eleanor L. Judge was named sergeant major of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point. Gunnery Sergeant Frances Gonzales, in 1975, became the first sergeant of Casual Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.⁵⁷

1973-1977 Summary

The Snell Committee report, approved in November 1973, challenged the Marine Corps to take a new look at its use of womanpower, and the zero draft situation for military services demanded it. Combined with the women's movement, changing attitudes in American society, and successful recruiting in terms of quality as well as numbers, these factors added up to a role of increased importance to be played by women in the Marine Corps.

Reserves After Korea

*Deactivation of the WR Platoons—Woman Special Enlistment Program—Strength
Women Reserve Officers—Formal Training for Women Reservists*

Following the Korean War, the Woman Marine Organized Reserve program was reestablished and expanded. The extraordinary success of the original 13 platoons activated in 1949-1950 and mobilized by August 1950 demonstrated the wisdom and practicality of the plan to maintain a trained cadre of women. Accordingly, when the Reservists completed their tour of duty and the Korean emergency neared settlement, Headquarters set an objective of 18 women's platoons having a strength of two officers and 50 enlisted women each.

Their mission explicitly was ". . . to provide trained women reservists to meet initial mobilization needs of the Marine Corps."¹ To this end, each of these post-Korean platoons was assigned a specialty determined by mobilization needs. The original plans called for units trained in administration, supply, classification, and disbursing. In 1953, First Lieutenant Margaret A. Brewer, a future Director of Women Marines, organized a communication platoon of 10 officers and 47 enlisted women in Brooklyn, bringing the total up to 19 WR units. Later, a 20th platoon was activated in Miami, Florida. Unlike the pre-Korea Reserve program, these women not only participated in formal specialty training at their home armory, but they attended summer training at Marine Corps posts and stations.

The WR platoons were attached to the parent Reserve unit and came under the command of the male commanding officer. Women officers were designated as platoon leaders and assistant platoon leaders, but were commonly referred to as the commanding officer and executive officer by the women members. Active duty women Marines, one officer and one or two enlisted women were assigned to the inspector-instructor staff to assist the Reserve platoon leader.

The women's platoon was responsible for its own internal administration, recruitment, adherence to rank and military occupational specialty distribution of the members, training, and mobilization state of readiness. Additionally, to make up for the increased work of the parent unit caused by the WR platoon,

the women were directed to assume part of the administrative work of the male organization.

Forty-eight two-hour training sessions per year were required. Training of the WRs took several forms: basic general military information for women with no prior service; refresher courses for former servicewomen; and formal classes in the unit's specialty. Summer camp was the highlight of the training program, not only because of the benefit of the classes, but because it provided military experiences (e.g., squadbay accommodations, restrictive liberty hours, liberty cards, standing duty watches, field night, barracks inspections, male drill instructors, mess halls, and reveille), unknown and impossible to acquire at the home armory. For some of the inexperienced Reservists, unaccustomed to military routine, the overnight change from civilian to Marine was jolting. They learned quickly that a merely clean sink was not good enough and that returning from liberty a few minutes late was tantamount to a calamity. As a rule, liberty at summer camp expired at 2200 for women below the rank of corporal and some of these lower ranking Marines carried an alarm clock in their purse to avoid being late.²

The annual two-week training period included combat demonstrations, gas mask drill, classes, participation in a parade or review, as well as softball games and picnics with the regular WMs. At each post where women Reservists trained, a Woman Reserve liaison officer was assigned to coordinate the unit activities. She conducted the annual pretraining conference in the spring, attended by inspector-instructors and the platoon officers, and she assisted the unit during the actual training session.

At home, the Reservists enlarged the intended scope of the program with numerous recreational and public relations activities. Rifle, bowling, and softball teams were the rule. The WR platoons participated in parades on Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, and in celebration of local holidays. They were asked to attend movie premieres in the days when John Wayne and Marine Corps movies were common; and they helped the Marine Reserve Toys for Tots campaign by laundering and mending doll clothes, wrapping gifts,

and posing for publicity photographs. It was not unusual for enthusiastic women Reservists to spend several evenings a week at the armory rather than the required two hours.³

The first post-Korea WR platoon to be established was the Woman Marine Classification Platoon, 2d Infantry Battalion, in Boston, which was activated on 13 January 1952.⁴ "Boston's Own" was so successful that on 16 November 1955 it was redesignated a company with an authorized strength of three officers and 103 enlisted women. At the ceremony in honor of the first Woman Marine Reserve company, the unit was awarded two recently won trophies, the Katherine Towle Trophy given each year to the Woman Reserve platoon attaining the highest percentage of attendance at an-

nual field training and the Commanding Officer's trophy annually awarded to the best Woman Marine platoon attending summer training at Parris Island based on scholastic standing, percentage of attendance, and military bearing. The platoon had already made history as the first to win the Ruth Cheney Streeter trophy for attaining the highest percentage of combined officer and enlisted woman attendance at drill periods during 1952, a feat repeated in 1953. To the already impressive collection, the Boston Reservists added the National Women Reserve Rifle Team Trophy.⁵

A list of the 20 post-Korea, WM platoons in the Organized Reserve showing their dates of activation, and the names of the platoon leaders upon activation appears as a table on page 103.⁶

Future brigadier general, 1stLt Margaret A. Brewer (seated second from left), was inspector-instructor, WM Communication Platoon, 2d Communications Company, Brooklyn, New York. Capt Mary E. Roach (seated third from left) was the platoon commander in 1954.



WM Classification Platoon, 2d Infantry Battalion Boston, Massachusetts	13Jan52	Captain Olive P. McCarty, I&I, served as interim platoon leader.
WM Administrative Platoon, 3d Infantry Battalion St. Louis, Missouri	13Feb52	Captain Leontone A. Meyer
WM Administrative Platoon, 5th Infantry Battalion Detroit, Michigan	6Mar52	Major Evelyn J. Greathouse
WM Classification Platoon, 2d 105mm Howitzer Battalion Los Angeles, California	25Mar52	Captain Christine S. Strain
WM Classification Platoon 1st Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company Fort Schuyler, New York	17Apr52	Major Mildred D. Gannon
WM Classification Platoon, 9th Infantry Battalion Chicago, Illinois	24Apr52	Captain Mary R. Jason
WM Supply Platoon, 2d Depot Supply Battalion Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	24Apr52	First Lieutenant Florence E. Lovelace
WM Classification Platoon, 10th Infantry Battalion Seattle, Washington	1May52	Captain Virginia B. Strong
WM Disbursing Platoon, 2d Depot Supply Battalion Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (deactivated 1Dec55)	22May52	Unknown
WM Disbursing Platoon, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion Tampa, Florida	27May52	Captain Margaret E. Meyers
WM Classification Platoon, 1st Engineer Battalion Baltimore, Maryland	12Aug52	Major Betty F. Coy
WM Administrative Platoon, 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion Dallas, Texas	30Aug52	Captain Hazel C. Tyler
WM Administrative Platoon, 4th Infantry Battalion Minneapolis, Minnesota	5Sep52	Captain Florence I. Haasarud
WM Supply Platoon, 11th Infantry Battalion Cleveland, Ohio	2Dec52	Captain Bernice V. Carpenter
WM Supply Platoon, 7th Infantry Battalion San Bruno, California (later moved to 1st Antiaircraft Artillery, Automatic Weapons Battalion, San Francisco, California)	28Feb53	Captain Marjorie J. Woolman
WM Disbursing Platoon, 13th Infantry Battalion Washington, D.C.	28Apr53	Captain A. Taylor
WM Disbursing Platoon, 1st 155mm Gun Battalion Denver, Colorado	28Apr53	Second Lieutenant Marilyn J. Standage
WM Communications Platoon, 2d Communications Battalion Brooklyn, New York	19Nov53	Captain Janet M. Lowrie
WM Disbursing Platoon, 1st Communications Company Worcester, Massachusetts (formerly at Philadelphia)	1Dec53	First Lieutenant Marjorie B. MacKinnon
WM Supply Platoon, 10th Automatic Weapons Battery Kansas City, Missouri	7Mar54	First Lieutenant Virginia A. Hajek, I&I, served as interim platoon leader; Major Helen A. Wilson, platoon leader
WM Administrative Platoon, 2d 105mm Gun Battalion Miami, Florida	31Jul55	First Lieutenant Mabel A. Pauley

Deactivation of the WR Platoons

As a result of fiscal limitations and a desire to increase male enlisted strength to meet mobilization requirements, the Reserve Structure Board, meeting in May 1958, recommended the deactivation of the WR platoons. Two units, Kansas City and Tampa, had already been deactivated, leaving only 18 in 1957. At the time of the proposed dissolution of the platoons the total strength was 29 officers and 618 enlisted women as opposed to an authorized strength of 34 and 687. The strength of the WR platoons had peaked in 1955 with 35 officers and 664 enlisted women Marines.⁷

The undersigned does not concur with the recommendation of the Reserve Structure Board that the Woman Marine Reserve units be disbanded and the membership in the Organized Marine Corps Reserve units be restricted to male personnel, or to the arguments given to support such a recommendation.

The board report emphasized the decreasing strength of the platoons since 1955 and the cost involved in training women. The point was made that the same amount of money would support 200 additional six-month trainees (male). Lieutenant Colonel Elsie E. Hill, Head of the Women's Branch, Division of Reserve, took exception to the report and on 14 May 1958 submitted her views which were:

She continued:

Inasmuch as the statement is made that a strength of 45,000 is sufficient to provide all of the initial requirements for desired augmentation of the Fleet Marine Force upon mobilization it is assumed that numbers of trained personnel become of paramount importance. From just the standpoint of numbers alone, it becomes obvious that 600 women is a larger number of trained personnel than the 200 six-month trainees. . . .⁸

She argued that the 600 women could be used for administrative support during the early stages of mobilization, thus releasing a like number of Regulars who, she wrote, "... are not only highly trained, but at the optimum of training." Referring to the issue of the \$200,000 spent each year on the women's program, she pointed out that in 1957, two women had to be enlisted for a net gain of one, while five men had to be enlisted to produce the same result.

Lieutenant Colonel Hill concluded that to continue the organized program for women was the only economical course to follow. As might be expected, the Director of Women Marines, Colonel Julia E. Ham-

blet, the one person most directly responsible for the activation of WR platoons, did not agree with the board's recommendations and added the comments:

The basic problem appears to the undersigned to boil down to the following: which will be more important in the early stages of mobilization—approximately 600 trained or partially trained administrative personnel or a somewhat lesser number of potential combat Marines in various stages of training. It is believed that it would be impossible to mobilize a Selected Reserve of the size indicated . . . in the time contemplated without prior or simultaneous augmentation of administrative personnel at Mobilization Stations, Joint Examining and Induction Stations, District Headquarters and Processing Centers. It is my belief that the male administrative personnel in the Organized Reserve will be needed in the numbers available in the FMF and other operating force units with an early deployment schedule, and that the women will be needed as part of the required immediate administrative back-up. . . .⁹

The women's protests notwithstanding, it was decided to disband the units and to allow 227 women Reservists (one half of one percent of the authorized strength of the Organized Reserve) to remain in a drill pay status, affiliated with male Reserve units.¹⁰ There was a great deal of bitterness on the part of women Reservists who had faithfully served in the Reserve for as many as 11 years. Retired Lieutenant Colonel Mary E. Roddy recalls hearing the news of deactivation while she was at summer training with her platoon at San Diego. The Dallas women were finishing up an enjoyable and profitable two weeks and she was reluctant to tell them of the impending disbandment of the program. On the night before leaving for home, she broke the news so that she would be the first to tell them. A final inspection at deactivation ceremonies for the unit was held at the Dallas Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Training Center on Saturday, 27 September 1958. Joining Major Roddy for the inspection was Lieutenant Colonel Joe B. Griffith, Jr., commanding officer of the 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion.¹¹

At first there was spirited competition for the coveted 227 billets but by 1967 the number of women participating in a paid status with the Organized Reserve dwindled to two officers and 74 enlisted women.¹² Between 1958 and 1967 there was no Reserve program for WMs.

Woman Special Enlistment Program

An outgrowth of the Woman Marine Program Study Group of 1964 (General Pepper Board) was the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee in 1966 to study Reserve

training for women Marines. This committee recommended the creation of three women's platoons, and the enlistment of women without prior service who would be sent to Parris Island for a 10-week period of training (an adaptation of the six-month training program in effect at the time for male Marines).¹³

The platoon idea was quickly discarded as being too expensive and too restrictive geographically. The Director of Women Marines, Colonel Barbara J. Bishop, did not approve of the plan to train Reservists at Parris Island due to the lack of space at the Woman Recruit Training Battalion. So, it was not until 10 June 1971, nearly four years after the submission of the committee report, that the Woman Marine Special Enlistment Program was established in the Marine Corps Reserve. Marine Corps Order 1001R.47 provided for an initial quota of 88 women to be recruited and enlisted by Organized Reserve units (ground and aviation). These women, integrated with platoons of regular WMs, received ten weeks of active duty. Training of varying periods was offered after completion of basic training.

Reservists then returned home and attended regular drills and training periods with their units for the remainder of a three-year enlistment.¹⁴

From that time on, the assignment and utilization of women Reservists paralleled that of the Regulars. In 1973 when the Commandant approved a pilot program to assign women Marines to division, wing, and force service regiment headquarters based in the United States, women Reservists moved into those units in the Organized Reserve. By May 1976, one and one-half percent (i.e., 30 officer and 400 enlisted billets) of the members of the 4th Marine Division/Wing were women.¹⁵

In the year in which the prohibition which limited women officers to succeeding to command only of units made up primarily of women was lifted, 1973, the way was opened for women to command Organized Reserve units. One of the first to do so was Major Jeanne B. Botwright Humphrey, Commanding Officer, Truck Company, 4th Service Battalion, Erie, Pennsylvania.

LtCol Joe B. Griffith, Jr., and Maj Mary E. Roddy conduct inspection at the deactivation ceremony in 1958 of the WR Platoon, 1st 4.5-inch Rocket Battalion, Dallas, Texas.



Strength

As early as 1948, a strength goal for women Marines was set at one percent of the authorized enlisted strength of the Marine Corps even though the law allowed for a maximum of two percent. The same figures dictated the number of women allowed to participate in the Reserve. In 1967, Public Law 90-130 removed the percentage restrictions and has allowed for a steady increase in the number of women Marines, Regular and Reserve. In 1975, the Director of the Division of Reserve, Major General Michael P. Ryan, acting on a request from the Commanding General, 4th Marine Division, stated that it would be possible and advantageous to increase the number of women to five percent of the authorized strength of the Organized Reserve. But due to the desirability of an incremental rate of growth, he asked that the ceiling for fiscal year 1976 be increased to three percent. This translated into 1,937 women.¹⁶ By 1977, ahead of the schedule, a maximum of five percent was authorized. Actual figures on 30 June 1977 were 40 officers and 668 enlisted women in the 4th Marine Division and 4th Marine Aircraft Wing.

Women Reserve Officers

There remained the perplexing problems of providing adequate training for women Reserve officers. While organized units were willing and often anxious to join enlisted women, most of whom had administrative skills, few units could find a place for the officers, especially if they were above the rank of captain. Major General Ryan encouraged the male units to join women officers.* Believing that the most profitable training comes from experience in an organized unit, he took positive steps to make this opportunity available to the women. In 1976 a message was sent from Headquarters Marine Corps to the Commanding Generals, 4th Marine Division and 4th Marine Aircraft Wing authorizing them to exceed authorized officer strength by joining WM officers in numbers not to exceed five percent of total authorized

officer strength. Since these are combat-ready units, the women could not be included in their mobilization plans, but upon mobilization would be reassigned individually to base units to replace male Marines who would in turn augment the Reserve units. Women Reservists who had been openly critical of the lack of meaningful training opportunities found reason for optimism in the message and especially the final paragraph which put teeth into the plan and read:

As the majority of available WM officer assets are in the administrative and supply fields, this is an opportunity for individual commanders to improve administrative and supply efforts.

Request this headquarters be advised of results of this program. Request you reply no later than 31 December 1976.¹⁷

Formal Training for Women Reservists

Beyond unit training, increased numbers of women Reservists received orders to formal technical and professional schools. In 1971, four years after the first Regular woman officer entered the midlevel Amphibious Warfare School at Quantico, Major Patricia A. Hook and Captain Elizabeth D. Doize were assigned to Phase I of the shortened Reserve version of that course. Major Hook returned to Quantico the following summer to complete Phase II and became the first woman Reserve officer to graduate from the Reserve Officers' Amphibious Warfare Course. In 1973, Lieutenant Colonel Patricia A. Meid and Major Hook attended the special Reserve course offered by the Command and Staff College, becoming the first women Reservists to do so.¹⁸

The most dramatic manifestation of a change in attitude and policy resulting in broader and unusual opportunities for women Reservists was the assignment of the military occupational specialty of air delivery to Private Beth Ann Fraser. Having joined the Reserve under the Special Enlistment Program, her three-year contract provided for initial recruit training at Parris Island followed by specialist training. In Private Fraser's case, that meant three weeks at the Army Airborne School ("jump school") at Fort Benning, Georgia.

She graduated with Platoon 9A, Woman Recruit Training Command, on 15 November 1976. Even before her basic training began she had been preparing herself for the physical rigors of jump school by running two miles several days a week. At Parris Island she performed extra physical training and unlike the other women, she wore combat boots and utilities during the required run.

*The positive attitude of Major General Ryan was based upon his personal knowledge of the utilization of WRs in World War II. He estimated that at least 18,000 women would be needed again in an emergency, and he believed in the importance of their training. This tends to support a contention of Colonel Hamblet, that the men who served in World War II recognized the contribution of the WRs and that as these men retired, women Marines received less and less consideration.

Private Fraser entered the Airborne School on 16 November where the training included physical conditioning, practicing parachute landing falls, tower jumps, and finally actual jumps from an airplane. The chief instructor at the airborne battalion, Master Sergeant D. W. Fischer, described Fraser as “. . . physically strong, a bit above average, with lots of esprit de corps.”¹⁹ Her platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Thomas Rowe, said of her, “We don’t often get women through here who are in such good physical shape or have her ‘can do’ attitude. She is definitely representative of what I think a Marine stands for.”²⁰ Private Fraser attributed her success to the Marines of her home unit of whom she said, “Those guys really helped. They had me running, pulling-up, sitting-up, the works.”²¹

To demonstrate the Corps’ pride in her accomplishment, Brigadier General Jack M. Frisbie, commanding general of the 4th Force Service Support Group, not only attended Private Fraser’s graduation but also promoted her to private first class. Addition-

ally, her former drill instructor from Parris Island, Sergeant Kathy A. Potter, made a special trip to congratulate the first woman Marine to graduate from Army Airborne School.

Private First Class Fraser returned to her Reserve unit, the Beach and Port Operations Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Force Service Support Group in San Jose, California, to serve the remainder of her contract. Her MOS is an example of the type of rear echelon duty that can be performed by women, delivering supplies by air. Since she graduated, several women Regulars have attended the same school.

The cited examples, Major Humphrey, commanding officer of a truck company; Private First Class Fraser, assigned to air delivery; and the number of WMs serving in organized units along with male Marines, testify to a more total integration of women into the Marine Corps Reserve and the recognition of their potential value as a source of trained Marines in the event of war or national emergency.



Pvt Diane Curtis smiles as she receives her Marine Corps emblem during graduation exercises at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina in March 1967. The emblem-pinning ceremony signifies the woman has successfully completed recruit training.